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DOMBEY AND SON.

CHILD-PICTURES

FROM

DICKENS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY S. EYTINGE, JR.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1868.

21466,45
1867. Dec. 26
Gift of
the Publishers.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by
TICKNOR AND FIELDS,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

UNIVERSITY PRESS: WELCH, BIGELOW, & CO.,
CAMBRIDGE.

THESE chapters, as being especially associated with children, have been selected from my various books, for separate publication under the title appended to this volume. Although they necessarily lose interest and purpose when detached from their context and removed from their niches in the works of fiction to which they respectively belong, this compilation is made for American children with my free consent.

CHARLES DICKENS.

BOSTON, November, 1867.

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[Engraved under the superintendence of A. V. S. Anthony.]

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LITTLE NELL.

LITTLE NELL.

I.

NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER.

ONE night I had roamed into the city, and was walking slowly on in my usual way, musing upon a great many things, when I was arrested by an inquiry which seemed to be addressed to myself. I turned hastily round, and found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town.

"It is a very long way from here," said I, "my child."

"I know that, sir," she replied timidly. "I am afraid it is a very long way, for I came from there to-night."

"Alone?" said I, in some surprise.

"O yes, I don't mind that; but I am a little frightened now, for I have lost my road."

"And what made you ask it of me? Suppose I should tell you wrong."

"I am sure you will not do that," said the little

creature; "you are such a very old gentleman, and walk so slow yourself."

I cannot describe how much I was impressed by this appeal and the energy with which it was made, which brought a tear into the child's clear eye, and made her slight figure tremble as she looked up into my face.

"Come," said I, "I 'll take you there."

She put her hand in mine as confidingly as if she had known me from her cradle, and we trudged away together; the little creature accommodating her pace to mine, and rather seeming to lead and take care of me than I to be protecting her. I observed that every now and then she stole a curious look at my face, as if to make quite sure that I was not deceiving her, and that these glances (very sharp and keen they were too) seemed to increase her confidence at every repetition.

For my part, my curiosity and interest were at least equal to the child's, for child she certainly was, although I thought it probable, from what I could make out, that her very small and delicate frame imparted a peculiar youthfulness to her appearance. Though more scantily attired than she might have been, she was dressed with perfect neatness, and betrayed no marks of poverty or neglect.

It was not until we arrived in the street itself, that she knew where we were. Clapping her hands

with pleasure, and running on before me for a short distance, my little acquaintance stopped at a door, and, remaining on the step till I came up, knocked at it when I joined her.

A part of this door was glass, unprotected by any shutter, which I did not observe at first, for all was very dark and silent within, and I was anxious (as indeed the child was also) for an answer to our summons. When she had knocked twice or thrice, there was a noise as if some person were moving inside; and at length a faint light appeared through the glass, which, as it approached very slowly, — the bearer having to make his way through a great many scattered articles, — enabled me to see both what kind of person it was who advanced, and what kind of place it was through which he came.

He was a little old man with long gray hair, whose face and figure, as he held the light above his head and looked before him as he approached, I could plainly see. Though much altered by age, I fancied I could recognize in his spare and slender form something of that delicate mould which I had noticed in the child. Their bright blue eyes were certainly alike; but his face was so deeply furrowed, and so very full of care, that here all resemblance ceased.

The place through which he made his way at leisure was one of those receptacles for old and cu-

rious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of this town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armor here and there, fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters, rusty weapons of various kinds, distorted figures in china and wood and iron and ivory, tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches and tombs and deserted houses, and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but what was in keeping with himself; nothing that looked older or more worn than he.

As he turned the key in the lock, he surveyed me with some astonishment, which was not diminished when he looked from me to my companion. The door being opened, the child addressed him as grandfather, and told him the little story of our companionship.

"Why, bless thee, child!" said the old man, patting her on the head, "how couldst thou miss thy way? What if I had lost thee, Nell!"

"I would have found my way back to *you*, grandfather," said the child, boldly; "never fear."

The old man kissed her, and then turning to me and begging me to walk in, I did so. The door was

closed and locked. Preceding me with the light, he led me through the place I had already seen from without, into a small sitting-room behind, in which was another door opening into a kind of closet, where I saw a little bed that a fairy might have slept in, it looked so very small, and was so prettily arranged. The child took a candle and tripped into this little room, leaving the old man and me together.

"You must be tired, sir," said he, as he placed a chair near the fire; "how can I thank you?"

"By taking more care of your grandchild another time, my good friend," I replied.

"More care!" said the old man, in a shrill voice, — "more care of Nelly! Why, who ever loved a child as I love Nell?"

He said this with such evident surprise that I was perplexed what answer to make, and the more so because, coupled with something feeble and wandering in his manner, there were in his face marks of deep and anxious thought, which convinced me that he could not be, as I had at first been inclined to suppose, in a state of dotage or imbecility.

There was a knock at the door by which I had entered, and Nell, bursting into a hearty laugh, which I was rejoiced to hear, for it was childlike and full of hilarity, said it was no doubt dear old Kit come back at last.

"Foolish Nell!" said the old man, fondling with her hair. "She always laughs at poor Kit."

The child laughed again more heartily than before, and I could not help smiling from pure sympathy. The little old man took up a candle, and went to open the door. When he came back, Kit was at his heels.

Kit was a shock-headed, shambling, awkward lad, with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose, and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw. He stopped short at the door on seeing a stranger, twirled in his hand a perfectly round old hat without any vestige of a brim, and resting himself now on one leg and now on the other, and changing them constantly, stood in the doorway, looking into the parlor with the most extraordinary leer I ever beheld. I entertained a grateful feeling towards the boy from that minute, for I felt that he was the comedy of the child's life.

The child soon occupied herself in preparations for giving Kit a writing-lesson, of which it seemed he had a couple every week, and one regularly on that evening, to the great mirth and enjoyment both of himself and his instructress. To relate how it was a long time before his modesty could be so far prevailed upon as to admit of his sitting down in the parlor in the presence of an unknown gentleman, — how, when he did sit down, he tucked up his sleeves,

and squared his elbows, and put his face close to the copy-book and squinted horribly at the lines, — how from the very first moment of having the pen in his hand he began to wallow in blots, and to daub himself with ink up to the very roots of his hair, — how, if he did by accident form a letter properly, he immediately smeared it out again with his arm, in his preparations to make another, — how, at every fresh mistake, there was a fresh burst of merriment from the child, and a louder and not less hearty laugh from poor Kit himself, — and how there was all the way through, notwithstanding, a gentle wish on her part to teach, and an anxious desire on his to learn, — to relate all these particulars would no doubt occupy more time and space than they deserve. It will be sufficient to say that the lesson was given, — that evening passed and night came on, — that the old man grew restless and impatient, — that he quitted the house at last, — and that the child was left alone within its gloomy walls.

II.

NELL'S FLIGHT.

QUIET and solitude were destined to hold uninterrupted rule no longer beneath the roof that sheltered the child. Next morning the old man was in a raging fever, accompanied with delirium; and, sinking under the influence of this disorder, he lay for many weeks in imminent peril of his life.

At length the crisis of his disorder was past, and he began to mend. By very slow and feeble degrees his consciousness came back, but the mind was weakened and its functions were impaired. He was patient and quiet; often sat brooding, but not despondently, for a long space; was easily amused, even by a sunbeam on the wall or ceiling; made no complaint that the days were long or the nights tedious; and appeared, indeed, to have lost all count of time, and every sense of care or weariness. He would sit for hours together with Nell's small hand in his, playing with the fingers, and stopping sometimes to smooth her hair or kiss her brow; and, when he saw that tears were glistening in her eyes, would look, amazed, about him for the cause,

and forget his wonder even while he looked. One day, sighing mournfully, he drew her towards him, and said: "After all the time and money I have lost, and all the agony of mind I have undergone, which makes me what you see, I am ruined, and — worse, far worse than that — have ruined thee, for whom I ventured all. If we are beggars — !"

"What if we are?" said the child, boldly. "Let us be beggars, and be happy."

"Beggars — and happy!" said the old man. "Poor child!"

"Dear grandfather," cried the girl, with an energy which shone in her flushed face, trembling voice, and impassioned gesture, "I am not a child in that, I think; but even if I am, O, hear me, pray, that we may beg, or work in open roads or fields, to earn a scanty living, rather than live as we do now."

"Nelly!" said the old man.

"Yes, yes, rather than live as we do now," the child repeated, more earnestly than before. "If you are sorrowful, let me know why, and be sorrowful too; if you waste away, and are paler and weaker every day, let me be your nurse, and try to comfort you. If you are poor, let us be poor together; but let me be with you, do let me be with you, or I shall break my heart and die. Dear grandfather, let us leave this sad place to-morrow, and beg our way from door to door."

The old man covered his face with his hands, and hid it in the pillow of the couch on which he lay.

"Let us be beggars," said the child, passing an arm around his neck; "I have no fear but we shall have enough, I am sure we shall. Let us walk through country places, and sleep in fields and under trees, and never think of money again, or anything that can make you sad; but rest at nights, and have the sun and wind upon our faces in the day, and thank God together. Let us never set foot in dark rooms or melancholy houses any more, but wander up and down wherever we like to go; and when you are tired, you shall stop to rest in the pleasantest place that we can find, and I will go and beg for both."

"We will," answered the old man; "we will travel afoot through fields and woods, and by the side of rivers, and trust ourselves to God in the places where he dwells. It is far better to lie down at night beneath an open sky, than to rest in close rooms which are always full of care and weary dreams. Thou and I together, Nell, may be cheerful and happy yet, and learn to forget this time, as if it had never been."

"We will be happy," cried the child. "We never can be here."

"No, we never can again, — never again, — that's truly said," rejoined the old man. "Let us

steal away to-morrow morning, — early and softly, that we may not be seen or heard, — and leave no trace or track for them to follow by. Poor Nell! thy cheek is pale, and thy eyes are heavy; but thou wilt be well again, and merry too, when we are far away. To-morrow morning, dear, we 'll turn our faces from this scene of sorrows, and be as free and happy as the birds."

And then the old man clasped his hands above her head, and said, in a few broken words, that, from that time forth, they would wander up and down together, and never part more until Death took one or other of the twain.

The next morning she awoke to find that the stars were shining brightly in the sky. At length the day began to glimmer, and the stars to grow pale and dim. As soon as she was sure of this, she arose, and dressed herself for the journey.

The old man was yet asleep, and, as she was unwilling to disturb him, she left him to slumber on until the sun rose. He was anxious that they should leave the house without a minute's loss of time, and was soon ready.

They got the door open without noise, and, passing into the street, stood still.

"Which way?" said the child.

The old man looked irresolutely and helplessly, first at her, then to the right and left, then at her

again, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgiving, and, putting her hand in his, led him gently away.

It was the beginning of a day in June; the deep blue sky unsullied by a cloud, and teeming with brilliant light. The streets were as yet nearly free from passengers, the houses and shops were closed, and the healthful air of the morning fell like breath from angels on the sleeping town.

III.

MRS. JARLEY'S WAXWORK SHOW.

THE afternoon had worn away into a beautiful evening, when they arrived at a point where the road made a sharp turn, and struck across a common. On the border of this common, and close to the hedge which divided it from the cultivated fields, a caravan was drawn up to rest; upon which, by reason of its situation, they came so suddenly that they could not have avoided it if they would.

It was not a shabby, dingy, dusty cart, but a smart little house upon wheels, with white dimity curtains festooning the windows, and window-shutters of green picked out with panels of a staring red, in which happily contrasted colors the whole concern shone brilliant. Neither was it a poor caravan, drawn by a single donkey or emaciated horse; for a pair of horses in pretty good condition were released from the shafts and grazing on the frowzy grass. Neither was it a Gypsy caravan, for at the open door (graced with a bright brass knocker) sat a Christian lady, stout and comfortable to look upon, who wore a large bonnet trembling with bows. And that it was not an unprovided or destitute caravan was clear from this lady's

occupation, which was the very pleasant one of taking tea. The tea-things, including a bottle of very suspicious character, and a cold knuckle of ham, were set forth upon a drum, covered with a white napkin; and there, as if at the most convenient round-table in all the world, sat this roving lady, taking her tea and enjoying the prospect.

Noting the child's anxious manner, she hesitated and stopped.

"Come nearer," said she, beckoning to her to ascend the steps. "Are you hungry, child?"

"Not very, but we are tired, and it 's — it *is* a long way —"

"Well, hungry or not, you had better have some tea," rejoined her new acquaintance. "I suppose you are agreeable to that, old gentleman?"

The grandfather humbly pulled off his hat and thanked her. The lady of the caravan then bade him come up the steps likewise; but the drum proving an inconvenient table for two, they descended again, and sat upon the grass, where she handed down to them the tea-tray, the bread and butter, the knuckle of ham, and, in short, everything of which she had partaken herself.

"Set 'em out near the hind wheels, child, that 's the best place," said their friend, superintending the arrangements from above. "Now hand up the teapot for a little more hot water, and a pinch of fresh

tea, and then both of you eat and drink as much as you can, and don't spare anything; that's all I ask of you."

They might perhaps have carried out the lady's wish, if it had been less freely expressed, or even if it had not been expressed at all. But as this direction relieved them from any shadow of delicacy or uneasiness, they made a hearty meal and enjoyed it to the utmost.

The lady of the caravan sat looking at the child for a long time in silence, and then, getting up, brought out from a corner a large roll of canvas about a yard in width, which she laid upon the floor and spread open with her foot until it nearly reached from one end of the caravan to the other.

"There child," she said, "read that."

Nell walked down it, and read aloud, in enormous black letters, the inscription, "JARLEY'S WAX-WORK."

"Read it again," said the lady, complacently.

"Jarley's Waxwork," repeated Nell.

"That 's me," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Jarley."

[Mrs. Jarley afterwards asked Nell and her grandfather to remain with her and assist in showing the wax figures.]

"We are very much obliged to you, ma'am," said Nell, "and thankfully accept your offer."

"And you 'll never be sorry for it," returned Mrs.

Jarley. "I'm pretty sure of that. So that 's all settled, let us have a bit of supper."

In the mean while the caravan rumbled along with most unwonted noise, and stopped at last at the place of exhibition, where Nell dismounted amidst an admiring group of children, who evidently supposed her to be an important item of the curiosities, and were fully impressed with the belief that her grandfather was a cunning device in wax.

When the stupendous collection was uncovered, there were displayed, on a raised platform some two feet from the floor, running round the room, and parted from the rude public by a crimson rope breast-high, divers sprightly effigies of celebrated characters, singly and in groups, clad in glittering dresses of various climes and times, and standing more or less unsteadily upon their legs, with their eyes very wide open, and their nostrils very much inflated, and the muscles of their legs and arms very strongly developed, and all their countenances expressing great surprise.

When Nell had exhausted her first raptures at this glorious sight, Mrs. Jarley ordered the room to be cleared of all but herself and the child, and, sitting herself down in an arm-chair in the centre, formally invested her with a willow wand, long used by herself for pointing out the characters, and was at great pains to instruct her in her duty.

"That," said Mrs. Jarley, in her exhibition tone, as Nell touched a figure at the beginning of the platform, "is an unfortunate Maid of Honor in the Time of Queen Elizabeth, who died from pricking her finger in consequence of working on a Sunday. Observe the blood which is trickling from her finger; also the gold-eyed needle of the period, with which she is at work."

All this Nell repeated twice or thrice, pointing to the finger and the needle at the right times, and then passed on to the next.

"That, ladies and gentlemen," said Mrs. Jarley, "is Jasper Packlemerton of atrocious memory, who courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all by tickling the soles of their feet when they was sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue. On being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, he replied yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy, and hoped all Christian husbands would pardon him the offence. Let this be a warning to all young ladies to be particular in the character of the gentlemen of their choice. Observe that his fingers are curled as if in the act of tickling, and that his face is represented with a wink, as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders."

When Nell knew all about Mr. Packlemerton, and could say it without faltering, Mrs. Jarley passed on

to the fat man, and then to the thin man, the tall man, the short man, the old lady who died of dancing at a hundred and thirty-two, the wild boy of the woods, the woman who poisoned fourteen families with pickled walnuts, and other historical characters and interesting but misguided individuals. And so well did Nell profit by her instructions, and so apt was she to remember them, that, by the time they had been shut up together for a couple of hours, she was in full possession of the history of the whole establishment, and perfectly competent to the enlightenment of visitors.

Unquestionably Mrs. Jarley had an inventive genius. In the midst of the various devices for attracting visitors to the exhibition, Little Nell was not forgotten. The beauty of the child, coupled with her gentle and timid bearing, produced quite a sensation in the little country place. Grown-up folks began to be interested in the bright-eyed girl, and some score of little boys fell desperately in love, and constantly left enclosures of nuts and apples, directed in small-text, at the waxwork door.

This desirable impression was not lost upon Mrs. Jarley, who, lest Nell should become too cheap, kept her in the exhibition-room, where she described the figures every half-hour, to the great satisfaction of admiring audiences.

IV.

FLIGHT AGAIN.

[Nell and her grandfather might have stayed long with the wax-work show, but for a plot formed by some bad people to persuade the weak-minded old man to rob the caravan, and share the money with them. His only desire was to provide comfortably for Nell. She heard them trying to tempt him, and, for fear he might yield to it, she resolved to set off with him on their wanderings once more.]

SHE took him to her own chamber, and, still holding him by the hand as if she feared to lose him for an instant, gathered together the little stock she had, and hung her basket on her arm. The old man took his wallet from her hands and strapped it on his shoulders; his staff, too, she had brought away; and then she led him forth.

Through the straight streets, and narrow, crooked outskirts, their trembling feet passed quickly. Up the steep hill, too, crowned by the old gray castle, they toiled with rapid steps, and had not once looked behind.

At any other time the recollection of having deserted the friend who had shown them so much homely kindness, without a word of justification, —

the thought that they were guilty, in appearance, of treachery and ingratitude, — would have filled her with sorrow and regret. But now, all other considerations were lost in the new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life; and the very desperation of their condition roused and stimulated her.

In the pale moonlight, which lent a wanness of its own, the delicate face where thoughtful care already mingled with the winning grace and loveliness of youth, the too-bright eye, the spiritual head, the lips that pressed each other with such high resolve and courage of the heart, the slight figure, firm in its bearing and yet so very weak, told their silent tale; but told it only to the wind that rustled by, which, taking up its burden, carried, perhaps to some mother's pillow, faint dreams of childhood fading in its bloom, and resting in the sleep that knows no waking.

The night crept on apace, the moon went down, the stars grew pale and dim, and morning, cold as they, slowly approached. Then, from behind a distant hill, the noble sun rose up, driving the mists in phantom shapes before it, and clearing the earth of their ghostly forms till darkness came again. When it had climbed higher into the sky, and there was warmth in its cheerful beams, they laid them down to sleep, upon a bank, hard by some water.

But Nell retained her grasp upon the old man's arm, and, long after he was slumbering soundly, watched him with untiring eyes. Fatigue stole over her at last; her grasp relaxed, tightened, relaxed again, and they slept side by side.

"We shall be very slow to-day, dear," she said, next day, as they toiled painfully through the streets. "My feet are sore, and I have pains in all my limbs from the wet of this morning."

"It is a dreary way," returned her grandfather, piteously. "Is there no other road? Will you not let me go some other way than this?"

"Places lie beyond these," said the child, firmly, "where we may live in peace, and be tempted to do no harm. We will take the road that promises to have that end, and we would not turn out of it, if it were a hundred times worse than our fears lead us to expect. We would not, dear, would we?"

"No," replied the old man, wavering in his voice, no less than in his manner, — "no. Let us go on. I am ready. I am quite ready, Nell."

The child walked with more difficulty than she had led her companion to expect, for the pains that racked her joints were of no common severity, and exertion increased them. But they wrung from her no complaint, or look of suffering; and although the two travellers proceeded very slowly, they did proceed; and, clearing the town in course of time,

began to feel that they were fairly on their way.

She lay down that night with nothing between her and the sky; and, with no fears for herself, for she was past it now, put up a prayer for the poor old man. So very weak and spent she felt, so very calm and unresisting, that she had no thoughts of any wants of her own, but prayed that God would raise up some friend for *him*.

A penny loaf was all they had had that day. It was very little, but even hunger was forgotten in the strange tranquillity that crept over her senses. She lay down very gently, and, with a quiet smile upon her face, fell into a slumber.

Morning came. Much weaker, diminished powers even of sight and hearing, and yet the child made no complaint, — perhaps would have made none, even if she had not that inducement to be silent, travelling by her side. She felt a hopelessness of their ever being extricated together from that forlorn place, a dull conviction that she was very ill, perhaps dying; but no fear or anxiety.

A loathing of food, that she was not conscious of until they expended their last penny in the purchase of another loaf, prevented her partaking even of this poor repast. Her grandfather ate greedily, which she was glad to see.

They were dragging themselves along, and the

LITTLE NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER.

child felt that the time was close at hand when her enfeebled powers would bear no more. There appeared to them, at this juncture, going in the same direction as themselves, a traveller on foot. Animated with a ray of hope, the child shot on before her grandfather, and, going close to the stranger, began in a few faint words to implore his help, and fell senseless at his feet.

He threw down his stick and book, and, dropping on one knee beside her, endeavored, by such simple means as occurred to him, to restore her to herself; while her grandfather, standing idly by, wrung his hands, and implored her with many endearing expressions to speak to him, were it only a word.

"She is quite exhausted," said the traveller, glancing upward into his face. "You have taxed her powers too far, friend."

"She is perishing of want," rejoined the old man. "I never thought how weak and ill she was till now."

Casting a look upon him, half reproachful and half compassionate, the traveller took the child in his arms, and, bidding the old man gather up her little basket and follow him directly, bore her away at his utmost speed.

There was a small inn within sight, to which it would seem he had been directing his steps when so unexpectedly overtaken. Towards this place he

hurried with his unconscious burden, and, rushing into the kitchen, and calling upon the company there assembled to make way for God's sake, deposited it upon a chair before the fire.

The women straightway carried her off to bed; and, having covered her up warm, bathed her cold feet, and wrapped them in flannel, despatched a messenger for the doctor.

The report was that the child was better, but was extremely weak, and would at least require a day's rest, and careful nursing, before she could proceed upon her journey.

V.

NELL'S ILLNESS AND DEATH.

FROM that time there sprung up in the old man's mind a solicitude about the child which never slept or left him. Never, no, never once, in one unguarded moment from that time to the end, did any care for himself, any thought of his own comfort, any selfish consideration or regard, distract his thoughts from the gentle object of his love.

He would follow her up and down, waiting till she should tire and lean upon his arm, — he would sit opposite to her in the chimney-corner, content to watch, and look, until she raised her head and smiled upon him as of old, — he would discharge, by stealth, those household duties which tasked her powers too heavily, — he would rise, in the cold dark nights, to listen to her breathing in her sleep, and sometimes crouch for hours by her bedside only to touch her hand. He who knows all can only know what hopes, and fears, and thoughts of deep affection, were in that one disordered brain, and what a change had fallen upon the poor old man.

Sometimes — weeks had crept on then — the

child, exhausted, though with little fatigue, would pass whole evenings on a couch beside the fire.

She had sought out the young children whom she first saw playing in the churchyard. One of these was her little favorite and friend, and often sat by her side. It was his delight to help her, or to fancy that he did so, and they soon became close companions.

It happened that, as she was reading by herself one day, this child came running in with his eyes full of tears, and, after holding her from him, and looking at her eagerly for a moment, clasped his little arms passionately about her neck.

"What now?" said Nell, soothing him. "What is the matter?"

"She is not one yet!" cried the boy, embracing her still more closely. "No, no, not yet."

She looked at him wonderingly, and, putting his hair back from his face and kissing him, asked what he meant.

"You must not be one, dear Nell," cried the boy. "We can't see them. They never come to play with us, or talk to us. Be what you are. You are better so."

"I do not understand you," said the child. "Tell me what you mean."

"Why, they say," replied the boy, looking up into her face, "that you will be an Angel before the

birds sing again. But you won't be, will you? Don't leave us, Nell, though the sky is bright. Do not leave us!"

The child dropped her head, and put her hands before her eyes.

The end was drawing on. She died one morning soon after daybreak. They had read and talked to her in the earlier portion of the night, but, as the hours crept on, she sunk to sleep. They could tell, by what she faintly uttered in her dreams, that they were of her journeyings with the old man; they were of no painful scenes, but of those who had helped and used them kindly, for she often said, "God bless you!" with great fervor. Waking, she never wandered in her mind but once, and that was at beautiful music which she said was in the air. God knows. It may have been.

Opening her eyes at last, from a very quiet sleep, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile upon her face, — such, they said, as they had never seen, and never could forget, — and clung with both her arms about his neck. They did not know that she was dead, at first.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favor. "When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird — a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed — was in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless forever.

And now the bell — the bell she had so often heard by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure almost as a living voice — rung its remorseless toll for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy, poured forth — on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life — to gather round her tomb. What was the death it would shut in, to that which still could walk above it!

Along the crowded path they bore her now; pure as the newly fallen snow that covered it; whose day on earth had been as fleeting. Under that porch, where she had sat when Heaven in its mercy brought her to that peaceful spot, she passed again; and the old church received her in its quiet shade.

They carried her to one old nook, where she had many and many a time sat musing, and laid their

burden softly on the pavement. The light streamed on it through the colored window, — a window where the boughs of trees were ever rustling in the summer, and where the birds sang sweetly all day long. With every breath of air that stirred among those branches in the sunshine, some trembling, changing light would fall upon her grave.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Many a young hand dropped in its little wreath, many a stifled sob was heard. Some — and they were not a few — knelt down. All were sincere and truthful in their sorrow.

They saw the vault covered and the stone fixed down. Then, when the dusk of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the sacred stillness of the place, — when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all (it seemed to them) upon her quiet grave, — in that calm time, when all outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them, — then, with tranquil and submissive hearts, they turned away, and left the child with God.

THE MARCHIONESS.

THE MARCHIONESS.

I.

THE SMALL SERVANT.

[Dick Swiveller had entered on his duties as clerk to Sampson Brass, Esq., Attorney at Law. Miss Sally Brass, the lawyer's elder sister, was also employed in the office. One day he had an unexpected visitor.]

A COACH stopped near the door, and presently afterwards there was a loud double-knock. As this was no business of Mr. Swiveller's, the person not ringing the office-bell, he pursued his diversions with perfect composure, notwithstanding that he rather thought there was nobody else in the house.

In this, however, he was mistaken; for, after the knock had been repeated with increased impatience, the door was opened, and somebody with a very heavy tread went up the stairs and into the room above. Mr. Swiveller was wondering whether this might be another Miss Brass, twin-sister to the dragon, when there came a rapping of knuckles at the office door.

"Come in!" said Dick. "Don't stand upon ceremony. The business will get rather complicated if I 've many more customers. Come in!"

"O, please," said a little voice very low down in the doorway, "will you come and show the lodgings?"

Dick leant over the table, and descried a small slipshod girl in a dirty coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet. She might as well have been dressed in a violin-case.

"Why, who are you?" said Dick.

To which the only reply was, "O, please, will you come and show the lodgings?"

There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick as Dick was amazed at her.

"I have n't got anything to do with the lodgings," said Dick. "Tell 'em to call again."

"O, but please will you come and show the lodgings," returned the girl; "it 's eighteen shillings a week and us finding plate and linen. Boots and clothes is extra, and fires in winter-time is eightpence a day."

"Why don't you show 'em yourself? You seem to know all about 'em," said Dick.

"Miss Sally said I was n't to, because people

would n't believe the attendance was good if they saw how small I was first."

"Well, but they 'll see how small you are afterwards, won't they?" said Dick.

"Ah! But then they 'll have taken 'em for a fortnight, certain," replied the child with a shrewd look; "and people don't like moving when they 're once settled."

"This is a queer sort of thing," muttered Dick, rising. "What do you mean to say you are, — the cook?"

"Yes, I do plain cooking," replied the child. "I 'm housemaid too; I do all the work of the house."

"I suppose Brass and the Dragon and I do the dirtiest part of it," thought Dick. And he might have thought much more, being in a doubtful and hesitating mood, but that the girl again urged her request, and certain mysterious bumping sounds on the passage and staircase seemed to give note of the applicant's impatience. Richard Swiveller, therefore, sticking a pen behind each ear, and carrying another in his mouth as a token of his great importance and devotion to business, hurried out to meet and treat with the single gentleman.

He was a little surprised to perceive that the bumping sounds were occasioned by the progress up stairs of the single gentleman's trunk, which, being

nearly twice as wide as the staircase, and exceedingly heavy withal, it was no easy matter for the united exertions of the single gentleman and the coachman to convey up the steep ascent. But there they were, crushing each other, and pushing and pulling with all their might, and getting the trunk tight and fast in all kinds of impossible angles, and to pass them was out of the question; for which sufficient reason, Mr. Swiveller followed slowly behind, entering a new protest on every stair against the house of Mr. Sampson Brass being thus taken by storm.

To these remonstrances the single gentleman answered not a word, but, when the trunk was at last got into the bedroom, sat down upon it and wiped his bald head and face with his handkerchief. He was very warm, and well he might be; for, not to mention the exertion of getting the trunk up stairs, he was closely muffled in winter garments, though the thermometer had stood all day at eighty-one in the shade.

"I believe, sir," said Richard Swiveller, taking his pen out of his mouth, "that you desire to look at these apartments. They are very charming apartments, sir. They command an uninterrupted view of — of over the way, and they are within one minute's walk of — of the corner of the street. There is exceedingly mild porter, sir, in the immediate vicinity, and the contingent advantages are extraordinary."

"What 's the rent?" said the single gentleman.

"One pound per week," replied Dick, improving on the terms.

"I'll take 'em."

"The boots and clothes are extras," said Dick; "and the fires in winter-time are —"

"Are all agreed to," answered the single gentleman.

"Two weeks certain," said Dick, "are the —"

"Two weeks!" cried the single gentleman gruffly, eying him from top to toe. "Two years. I shall live here for two years. Here. Ten pounds down. The bargain 's made."

"Why, you see," said Dick, "my name 's not Brass, and —"

"Who said it was? *My* name 's not Brass. What then?"

"The name of the master of the house is," said Dick.

"I 'm glad of it," returned the single gentleman; "it 's a good name for a lawyer. Coachman, you may go. So may you, sir."

Mr. Swiveller was so much confounded by the single gentleman riding roughshod over him at this rate, that he stood looking at him almost as hard as he had looked at Miss Sally. The single gentleman, however, was not in the slightest degree affect-

ed by this circumstance, but proceeded with perfect composure to unwind the shawl which was tied round his neck, and then to pull off his boots. Freed of these encumbrances, he went on to divest himself of his other clothing, which he folded up, piece by piece, and ranged in order on the trunk. Then he pulled down the window-blinds, drew the curtains, wound up his watch, and quite leisurely and methodically got into bed.

"Take down the bill," were his parting words, as he looked out from between the curtains; "and let nobody call me till I ring the bell."

With that the curtains closed, and he seemed to snore immediately.

"This is a most remarkable and supernatural sort of house!" said Mr. Swiveller, as he walked into the office with the bill in his hand. "She-dragons in the business, conducting themselves like professional gentlemen; plain cooks of three feet high appearing mysteriously from underground; strangers walking in and going to bed without leave or license in the middle of the day! If he should be one of the miraculous fellows that turn up now and then, and has gone to sleep for two years, I shall be in a pleasant situation. It's my destiny, however, and I hope Brass may like it. I shall be sorry if he don't. But it's no business of mine,—I have nothing whatever to do with it!"

One circumstance troubled Mr. Swiveller's mind very much; and that was that the small servant always remained somewhere in the bowels of the earth under Bevis Marks, and never came to the surface unless the single gentleman rang his bell, when she would answer it and immediately disappear again. She never went out, or came into the office, or had a clean face, or took off the coarse apron, or looked out of any one of the windows, or stood at the street door for a breath of air, or had any rest or enjoyment whatever. Nobody ever came to see her, nobody spoke of her, nobody cared about her.

"It 's of no use asking the Dragon," thought Dick one day, as he sat contemplating the features of Miss Sally Brass. "I suspect, if I asked any questions on that head, our alliance would be at an end. I wonder whether she *is* a dragon, by the by, or something in the mermaid way. She has rather a scaly appearance. But mermaids are fond of looking at themselves in the glass, which she can't be. And they have a habit of combing their hair, which she has n't. No, she 's a dragon."

"Where are you going, old fellow?" said Dick aloud, as Miss Sally wiped her pen as usual on the green dress and uprose from her seat.

"To dinner," answered the Dragon.

"To dinner!" thought Dick, "that 's another

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before the small servant, ordering her to sit down before it, and then, taking up a great carving-knife, made a mighty show of sharpening it upon the carving-fork.

"Do you see this?" said Miss Brass, slicing off about two square inches of cold mutton, after all this preparation, and holding it out on the point of the fork.

The small servant looked hard enough at it with her hungry eyes to see every shred of it, small as it was, and answered, "Yes."

"Then don't you ever go and say," retorted Miss Sally, "that you had n't meat here. There, eat it up."

This was soon done. "Now, do you want any more?" said Miss Sally.

The hungry creature answered with a faint "No." They were evidently going through an established form.

"You 've been helped once to meat," said Miss Brass, summing up the facts; "you have had as much as you can eat, you 're asked if you want any more, and you answer, 'No!' Then don't you ever go and say you were allowanced, mind that."

With those words, Miss Sally put the meat away and locked the safe, and then, drawing near to the small servant, overlooked her while she finished the potatoes.

It was plain that some extraordinary grudge was working in Miss Brass's gentle breast, and that it was this which impelled her, without the smallest present cause, to rap the child with the blade of the knife, now on her hand, now on her head, and now on her back, as if she found it quite impossible to stand so close to her without administering a few slight knocks. But Mr. Swiveller was not a little surprised to see his fellow-clerk, after walking slowly backwards towards the door, as if she were trying to withdraw herself from the room, but could not accomplish it, dart suddenly forward, and, falling on the small servant, give her some hard blows with her clenched hand. The victim cried, but in a subdued manner as if she feared to raise her voice; and Miss Sally, comforting herself with a pinch of snuff, ascended the stairs, just as Richard had safely reached the office.

II.

THE GAME OF CRIBBAGE.

RICHARD SWIVELLER, being often left alone, began to find the time hang heavy on his hands. For the better preservation of his cheerfulness, therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, he provided himself with a cribbage-board and pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which, it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were cor-

rect, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"O, I did n't mean any harm, indeed; upon my word, I did n't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It 's so very dull down stairs. Please don't you tell upon me, please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word, I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"O, ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

Vague recollections of several fantastic exercises with which he had refreshed himself after the fatigues of business, and to all of which, no doubt, the small servant was a party, rather disconcerted Mr. Swiveller; but he was not very sensitive on such points, and recovered himself speedily.

"Well, come in," he said, after a little consideration. "Here, sit down and I 'll teach you how to play."

"O, I durst n't do it," rejoined the small servant. "Miss Sally 'ud kill me, if she know'd I come up here."

"Have you got a fire down stairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally could n't kill me if she know'd I went down there, so I 'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It ain't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here 's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She *never* tasted it, — it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide, and appeared thoughtful for a moment; then, bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently he returned, followed by the boy from the public-house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord, at a period when he was deep in his books and desirous to conciliate his

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friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen.

"There!" said Richard, putting the plate before her. "First of all, clear that off, and then you 'll see what 's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that; but moderate your transports, you know, for you 're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"O, is n't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond all expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself, steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she soon learnt tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two sixpences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant, I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tight in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard, and waited for her lead.

Mr. Swiveller and his partner played several rubbers with varying success, until the loss of three sixpences, the gradual sinking of the purl, and the striking of ten o'clock, combined to render that gentleman mindful of the flight of Time, and the expediency of withdrawing before Mr. Sampson and Miss Sally Brass returned.

"With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health. You will excuse my wearing my hat, but the palace is damp, and the marble floor is — if I may be allowed the expression — sloppy."

As a precaution against this latter inconvenience, Mr. Swiveller had been sitting for some time with his feet on the hob, in which attitude he now gave utterance to these apologetic observations, and slowly sipped the last choice drops of nectar.

"The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the play?" said Mr. Swiveller, leaning his left arm heavily upon the table, and raising his voice and his right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.

The Marchioness nodded.

"Ha!" said Mr. Swiveller, with a portentous frown. "'T is well. Marchioness! — but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!" He illustrated these melodramatic morsels by handing the tankard to himself with great humility, receiving it haughtily, drinking from it thirstily, and smacking his lips fiercely.

The small servant, who was not so well acquainted with theatrical conventionalities as Mr. Swiveller (having indeed never seen a play, or heard one spoken of, except by chance through chinks of doors and in other forbidden places), was rather alarmed by demonstrations so novel in their nature, and showed her concern so plainly in her looks, that Mr. Swiveller felt it necessary to discharge his brigand manner for one more suitable to private life, as he asked, —

"Do they often go where glory waits 'em and leave you here?"

"O yes; I believe you, they do," returned the small servant. "Miss Sally's such a one-er for that, she is."

"Such a what?" said Dick.

"Such a one-er," returned the Marchioness.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Swiveller determined to forego his responsible duty of setting her right, and to suffer her to talk on; as it was evident that her tongue was loosened by the purl, and her opportunities for conversation were not so frequent as to render a momentary check of little consequence.

"They sometimes go to see Mr. Quilp," said the small servant, with a shrewd look; "they go to a many places, bless you!"

"Is Mr. Brass a wunner?" said Dick.

"Not half what Miss Sally is, he is n't," replied the small servant, shaking her head. "Bless you, he 'd never do anything without her."

"O, he would n't, would n't he?" said Dick.

"Miss Sally keeps him in such order," said the small servant. "He always asks her advice, he does; and he catches it sometimes. Bless you, you would n't believe how much he catches it."

"I suppose," said Dick, "that they consult together a good deal, and talk about a great many

people, — about me, for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?"

The Marchioness nodded amazingly.

"Complimentary?" said Mr. Swiveller.

The Marchioness changed the motion of her head, which had not yet left off nodding, and suddenly began to shake it from side to side, with a vehemence which threatened to dislocate her neck.

"Humph!" Dick muttered. "Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honor to — ?"

"Miss Sally says you're a funny chap," replied his friend.

"Well, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "that's not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or a degrading quality. Old King Cole was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history."

"But she says," pursued his companion, "that you ain't to be trusted."

"Why, really, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully; "several ladies and gentlemen — not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma'am, tradespeople — have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hotel over the way inclined strongly to that opinion to-night when I ordered him to prepare the banquet. It's a popu-

lar prejudice, Marchioness; and yet I am sure I don't know why, for I have been trusted in my time to a considerable amount, and I can safely say that I never forsook my trust until it deserted me, — never. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose?"

His friend nodded again, with a cunning look which seemed to hint that Mr. Brass held stronger opinions on the subject than his sister; and, seeming to recollect herself, added imploringly, "But don't you ever tell upon me, or I shall be beat to death."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, rising, "the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond, — sometimes better, as in the present case, where his bond might prove but a doubtful sort of security. I am your friend, and I hope we shall play many more rubbers together in this same saloon. But, Marchioness," added Richard, stopping in his way to the door, and wheeling slowly round upon the small servant, who was following with the candle, "it occurs to me that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eye at keyholes, to know all this."

"I only wanted," replied the trembling Marchioness, "to know where the key of the safe was hid; that was all; and I would n't have taken much, if I had found it, — only enough to squench my hunger."

"You did n't find it, then?" said Dick. "But

of course you did n't, or you 'd be plumper. Good night, Marchioness. Fare thee well, and if forever, then forever fare thee well, — and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents."

With this parting injunction, Mr. Swiveller emerged from the house; and, feeling that he had by this time taken quite as much to drink as promised to be good for his constitution (purl being a rather strong and heady compound), wisely resolved to betake himself to his lodgings, and to bed at once. Homeward he went, therefore; and his apartments (for he still retained the plural fiction) being at no great distance from the office, he was soon seated in his own bedchamber, where, having pulled off one boot and forgotten the other, he fell into deep cogitation.

"This Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, folding his arms, "is a very extraordinary person, — surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through the keyholes of doors. Can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

III.

MR. SWIVELLER'S ILLNESS.

THE lives of gentlemen devoted to such pleasures as Richard Swiveller are extremely precarious. That very night Mr. Richard was seized with an alarming illness, and in twenty-four hours was stricken with a raging fever.

Tossing to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling ever through deserts of thought where there was no resting-place, —in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until at last he sank into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more.

He awoke. With a sensation of most blissful rest, better than sleep itself, he began gradually to remember something of these sufferings, and to think what a long night it had been, and whether he had not been delirious twice or thrice. Happening, in the midst of these cogitations, to raise his hand, he was astonished to find how heavy it seemed, and yet how thin and light it really was. Still he felt indif-

ferent and happy; and, having no curiosity to pursue the subject, remained in the same waking slumber until his attention was attracted by a cough. This made him doubt whether he had locked his door last night, and feel a little surprised at having a companion in the room. Still he lacked energy to follow up this train of thought; and unconsciously fell, in a luxury of repose, to staring at some green stripes on the bed-furniture, and associating them strangely with patches of fresh turf, while the yellow ground between made gravel-walks, and so helped out a long perspective of trim gardens.

He was rambling in imagination on these terraces, and had quite lost himself among them indeed, when he heard the cough once more. The walks shrunk into stripes again at the sound; and raising himself a little in the bed, and holding the curtain open with one hand, he looked out.

The same room, certainly, and still by candle-light; but with what unbounded astonishment did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick-chamber, — all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there when he went to bed! The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the — the what? The Marchioness?

Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table.

There she sat, intent upon her game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner as if she feared to disturb him, — shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging, — going through all the mysteries of cribbage as if she had been in full practice from her cradle!

Mr. Swiveller contemplated these things for a short time, and, suffering the curtain to fall into its former position, laid his head on the pillow again.

"I 'm dreaming," thought Richard, "that 's clear. When I went to bed my hands were not made of egg-shells; and now I can almost see through 'em. If this is not a dream, I have woke up, by mistake, in an Arabian Night, instead of a London one. But I have no doubt I 'm asleep. Not the least."

Here the small servant had another cough.

"Very remarkable!" thought Mr. Swiveller. "I never dreamt such a real cough as that before. I don't know, indeed, that I ever dreamt either a cough or a sneeze. Perhaps it 's part of the philosophy of dreams that one never does. There 's another — and another. I say! — I 'm dreaming rather fast!"

For the purpose of testing his real condition, Mr. Swiveller, after some reflection, pinched himself in the arm.

"Queerer still!" he thought. "I came to bed

rather plump than otherwise, and now there 's nothing to lay hold of. I 'll take another survey."

The result of this additional inspection was, to convince Mr. Swiveller that the objects by which he was surrounded were real, and that he saw them, beyond all question, with his waking eyes.

"It 's an Arabian Night; that 's what it is," said Richard. "I 'm in Damascus or Grand Cairo. The Marchioness is a Genie, and having had a wager with another Genie about who is the handsomest young man alive, and the worthiest to be the husband of the Princess of China, has brought me away, room and all, to compare us together. Perhaps," said Mr. Swiveller, turning languidly round on his pillow, and looking on that side of his bed which was next the wall, "the Princess may be still — No, she 's gone."

Not feeling quite satisfied with this explanation, as, even taking it to be the correct one, it still involved a little mystery and doubt, Mr. Swiveller raised the curtain again, determined to take the first favorable opportunity of addressing his companion. An occasion soon presented itself. The Marchioness dealt, turned up a knave, and omitted to take the usual advantage; upon which, Mr. Swiveller called out as loud as he could, "Two for his heels!"

The Marchioness jumped up quickly, and clapped

her hands. "Arabian Night, certainly," thought Mr. Swiveller. "They always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads!"

It appeared, however, that she had only clapped her hands for joy; as directly afterwards she began to laugh, and then to cry; declaring, not in choice Arabic, but in familiar English, that she was "so glad she did n't know what to do."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully, "be pleased to draw nearer. First of all, will you have the goodness to inform me where I shall find my voice; and, secondly, what has become of my flesh?"

The Marchioness only shook her head mournfully and cried again; whereupon Mr. Swiveller (being very weak) felt his own eyes affected likewise.

"I begin to infer, from your manner, and these appearances, Marchioness," said Richard, after a pause, and smiling with a trembling lip, "that I have been ill."

"You just have!" replied the small servant, wiping her eyes. "And have n't you been a talking nonsense!"

"Oh!" said Dick. "Very ill, Marchioness, have I been?"

"Dead, all but," replied the small servant. "I

never thought you 'd get better. Thank Heaven, you have!"

Mr. Swiveller was silent for a long while. By and by he began to talk again, inquiring how long he had been there.

"Three weeks to-morrow," replied the small servant.

"Three what?" said Dick.

"Weeks," returned the Marchioness, emphatically; "three long, slow weeks."

The bare thought of having been in such extremity caused Richard to fall into another silence, and to lie flat down again, at his full length. The Marchioness, having arranged the bedclothes more comfortably, and felt that his hands and forehead were quite cool, — a discovery that filled her with delight, — cried a little more, and then applied herself to getting tea ready, and making some thin dry-toast.

While she was thus engaged, Mr. Swiveller looked on with a grateful heart, very much astonished to see how thoroughly at home she made herself, and attributing this attention, in its origin, to Sally Brass, whom, in his own mind, he could not thank enough. When the Marchioness had finished her toasting, she spread a clean cloth on a tray, and brought him some crisp slices and a great basin of weak tea, with which (she said) the doctor had left word he might refresh himself when he awoke. She

propped him up with pillows, if not as skilfully as if she had been a professional nurse all her life, at least as tenderly; and looked on with unutterable satisfaction while the patient — stopping every now and then to shake her by the hand — took his poor meal with an appetite and relish which the greatest dainties of the earth, under any other circumstances, would have failed to provoke. Having cleared away, and disposed everything comfortably about him again, she sat down at the table to take her own tea.

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "how 's Sally?"

The small servant screwed her face into an expression of the very uttermost entanglement of slyness, and shook her head.

"What, have n't you seen her lately?" said Dick.

"Seen her!" cried the small servant. "Bless you, I 've run away!"

Mr. Swiveller immediately laid himself down again quite flat, and so remained for about five minutes. By slow degrees he resumed his sitting posture after that lapse of time, and inquired: —

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"

"Live!" cried the small servant. "Here!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Swiveller.

And with that he fell down flat again, as suddenly as if he had been shot. Thus he remained, motion-

less and bereft of speech, until she had finished her meal, put everything in its place, and swept the hearth; when he motioned her to bring a chair to the bedside, and, being propped up again, opened a further conversation.

"And so," said Dick, "you have run away?"

"Yes," said the Marchioness; "and they 've been a tizing of me."

"Been — I beg your pardon," said Dick, — "what have they been doing?"

"Been a tizing of me — tizing, you know — in the newspapers," rejoined the Marchioness.

"Ay, ay," said Dick, "advertising?"

The small servant nodded, and winked. Her eyes were so red with waking and crying, that the Tragic Muse might have winked with greater consistency. And so Dick felt.

"Tell me," said he, "how it was that you thought of coming here."

"Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I had n't any friend at all, because the lodger, he never come back, and I did n't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was — "

"Was near a keyhole?" suggested Mr. Swiveller, observing that she faltered.

"Well, then," said the small servant, nodding,

"when I was near the office keyhole, — as you see me through, you know, — I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and would n't nobody come and take care of you? Mr. Brass, he says, 'It 's no business of mine,' he says; and Miss Sally, she says, 'He 's a funny chap, but it 's no business of mine'; and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I ran away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I 've been here ever since."

"This poor little Marchioness has been wearing herself to death!" cried Dick.

"No, I have n't," she returned, "not a bit of it. Don't you mind about me. I like sitting up, and I 've often had a sleep, bless you, in one of them chairs. But if you could have seen how you tried to jump out o' winder, and if you could have heard how you used to keep on singing and making speeches, you would n't have believed it. I 'm so glad you 're better, Mr. Liverer."

"Liverer, indeed!" said Dick, thoughtfully. "It 's well I *am* a liverer. I strongly suspect I should have died, Marchioness, but for you."

At this point, Mr. Swiveller took the small servant's hand in his again, and being, as we have seen, but poorly, might, in struggling to express his thanks,

have made his eyes as red as hers, but that she quickly changed the theme by making him lie down, and urging him to keep very quiet.

"The doctor," she told him, "said you was to be kept quite still, and there was to be no noise nor nothing. Now take a rest, and then we 'll talk again. I 'll sit by you, you know. If you shut your eyes, perhaps you 'll go to sleep. You 'll be all the better for it if you do."

The Marchioness, in saying these words, brought a little table to the bedside, took her seat at it, and began to work away at the concoction of some cooling drink, with the address of a score of chemists. Richard Swiveller, being indeed fatigued, fell into a slumber, and waking in about half an hour, inquired what time it was.

"Just gone half after six," replied his small friend, helping him to sit up again.

"Marchioness," said Richard, passing his hand over his forehead and turning suddenly round, as though the subject but that moment flashed upon him, "what has become of Kit?"

He had been sentenced to transportation for a great many years, she said.

Richard Swiveller thrust his lank arm out of bed, and griping her by the wrist, and drawing her close to him, bade her out with it, and freely too, or he would not answer for the consequences, being whol-

ly unable to endure that state of excitement and expectation. She promised compliance, on condition that the patient kept himself perfectly quiet, and abstained from starting up or tossing about.

"But if you begin to do that," said the small servant, "I 'll leave off. And so I tell you."

"You can't leave off, till you have gone on," said Dick. "And do go on, there 's a darling. Speak, sister, speak. Pretty Polly, say. O tell me when, and tell me where, pray, Marchioness, I beseech you!"

Unable to resist these fervent adjurations, which Richard Swiveller poured out as passionately as if they had been of the most solemn and tremendous nature, his companion spoke thus: —

"Well! Before I run away, I used to sleep in the kitchen, — where we played cards, you know. Miss Sally used to keep the key of the kitchen door in her pocket, and she always come down at night to take away the candle and rake out the fire. When she had done that, she left me to go to bed in the dark, locked the door on the outside, put the key in her pocket again, and kept me locked up till she come down in the morning — very early, I can tell you — and let me out. I was terrible afraid of being kept like this, because, if there was a fire, I thought they might forget me and only take care of

themselves, you know. So, whenever I see an old rusty key anywhere, I picked it up, and tried if it would fit the door, and at last I found in the dust-cellar a key that *did* fit it."

Here Mr. Swiveller made a violent demonstration with his legs. But the small servant immediately pausing in her talk, he subsided again, and, pleading a momentary forgetfulness of their compact, entreated her to proceed.

"They kept me very short," said the small servant. "O, you can't think how short they kept me! So I used to come out at night after they 'd gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sangwitches that you 'd left in the office, or even pieces of orange-peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange-peel and water?"

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had never tasted that ardent liquor; and once more urged his friend to resume the thread of her narrative.

"If you make believe very much, it 's quite nice," said the small servant; "but if you don't, you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning, certainly. Well, sometimes I used to come out after they 'd gone to bed, and sometimes before, you know; and one or two nights before there was all that precious noise in the office, — when the young man was took, I mean, — I come up stairs

while Mr. Brass and Miss Sally was a sittin' at the office fire; and I'll tell you the truth, that I come to listen again about the key of the safe."

[She then explained to Dick a plot formed by Mr. Brass to convict Kit of theft, — from which her evidence would clear him.]

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, plucking off his nightcap and flinging it to the other end of the room; "if you'll do me the favor to retire for a few minutes and see what sort of a night it is, I'll get up."

"You must n't think of such a thing," cried his nurse.

"I must indeed," said the patient, looking round the room. "Whereabouts are my clothes?"

"O, I'm so glad — you have n't got any," replied the Marchioness.

"Ma'am!" said Mr. Swiveller, in great astonishment.

"I've been obliged to sell them, every one, to get the things that was ordered for you. But don't take on about that," urged the Marchioness, as Dick fell back upon his pillow. "You 're too weak to stand, indeed."

"I am afraid," said Richard, dolefully, "that you're right. What ought I to do? what is to be done?"

It naturally occurred to him, on very little reflec-

tion, that the first step to take would be to communicate with one of the Mr. Garlands instantly. It was very possible that Mr. Abel had not yet left the office. In as little time as it takes to tell it, the small servant had the address in pencil on a piece of paper, and a verbal description of father and son, which would enable her to recognize either without difficulty. Armed with these slender powers, she hurried away, commissioned to bring either old Mr. Garland or Mr. Abel bodily to that apartment.

"I suppose," said Dick, as she closed the door slowly, and peeped into the room again, to make sure that he was comfortable, — "I suppose there 's nothing left, — not so much as a waistcoat even?"

"No, nothing."

"It 's embarrassing," said Mr. Swiveller, "in case of fire — even an umbrella would be something; but you did quite right, dear Marchioness. I should have died without you!"

IV.

CONCLUSION.

MR. SWIVELLER, recovering very slowly from his illness, and entering into the receipt of his annuity, bought for the Marchioness a handsome stock of clothes, and sent her to school forthwith, in redemption of the vow he had made upon his fevered bed. After casting about for some time for a name which should be worthy of her, he decided in favor of Sophronia Sphynx, as being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indicative of mystery. Under this title the Marchioness repaired, in tears, to the school of his selection, from which, as she soon distanced all competitors, she was removed before the lapse of many quarters to one of a higher grade. It is but bare justice to Mr. Swiveller to say, that, although the expenses of her education kept him in straitened circumstances for half a dozen years, he never slackened in his zeal, and always held himself sufficiently repaid by the accounts he heard (with great gravity) of her advancement, on his monthly visits to the governess, who looked upon him as a literary gentleman of eccentric habits, and of a most prodigious talent in quotation.

In a word, Mr. Swiveller kept the Marchioness at this establishment until she was, at a moderate guess, full nineteen years of age, — good-looking, clever, and good-humored; when he began to consider seriously what was to be done next. On one of his periodical visits, while he was revolving this question in his mind, the Marchioness came down to him, alone, looking more smiling and more fresh than ever. Then, it occurred to him, but not for the first time, that if she would marry him, how comfortable they might be! So Richard asked her; whatever she said, it was n't No; and they were married in good earnest that day week, which gave Mr. Swiveller frequent occasion to remark at divers subsequent periods that there had been a young lady saving up for him after all.

Sophronia was ever a most cheerful, affectionate, and provident wife to him; and Dick was to her an attached and domesticated husband. And they played many hundred thousand games of cribbage together. And let it be added, to Dick's honor, that, though we have called her Sophronia, he called her the Marchioness from first to last; and that upon every anniversary of the day on which he found her in his sick-room, there was great glorification.

PAUL AND FLORENCE.

PAUL AND FLORENCE.

I.

DOMBEY AND SON.

DOMBEY sat in the corner of the darkened room in the great arm-chair by the bedside, and Son lay tucked up warm in a little basket-bedstead, carefully disposed on a low settee immediately in front of the fire and close to it, as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin, and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new.

Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald, rather red, and, though a handsome, well-made man, too stern and pompous in appearance to be prepossessing. Son was very bald, and very red, and, though (of course) an undeniably fine infant, somewhat crushed and spotty in his general effect as yet. On the brow of Dombey, Time and his brother Care had set some marks, as on a tree that was to come down in good time, — remorseless twins they are for striding through their human forests, notching as they go, — while the countenance

of Son was crossed and recrossed with a thousand little creases, which the same deceitful Time would take delight in smoothing out and wearing away with the flat part of his scythe, as a preparation of the surface for his deeper operations.

Dombey, exulting in the long-looked-for event, jingled and jingled the heavy gold watch-chain that depended from below his trim blue coat, whereof the buttons sparkled phosphorescently in the feeble rays of the distant fire. Son, with his little fists curled up and clenched, seemed, in his feeble way, to be squaring at existence for having come upon him so unexpectedly.

A girl had been born in that house some six years before, and the child, who had stolen into the chamber unobserved, was now crouching timidly in a corner, whence she could see her mother's face. But what was a girl to Dombey and Son?

Mr. Dombey's cup of satisfaction was so full at this moment, however, that he felt he could afford a drop or two of its contents, even to sprinkle on the dust in the by-path of his little daughter.

So he said, "Florence, you may go and look at your pretty brother if you like, I dare say. Don't touch him!"

The child glanced keenly at the blue coat and stiff white cravat, which, with a pair of creaking boots and a very loud-ticking watch, embodied her

idea of a father; but her eyes returned to her mother's face immediately, and she neither moved nor answered.

Next moment, the lady had opened her eyes and seen the child; and the child had run towards her; and, standing on tiptoe, the better to hide her face in her embrace, had clung about her with a desperate affection very much at variance with her years.

The lady lay upon her bed, clasping her little daughter to her breast. The child clung close about her, with the same intensity as before, and never raised her head, or moved her soft cheek from her mother's face, or looked on those who stood around, or spoke, or moved, or shed a tear.

The two medical attendants exchanged a look across the bed; and the physician, stooping down, whispered in the child's ear. Not having understood the purport of his whisper, the little creature turned her perfectly colorless face and deep dark eyes towards him, but without loosening her hold in the least.

The whisper was repeated.

"Mamma!" said the child.

The little voice, familiar and dearly loved, awakened some show of consciousness, even at that ebb. For a moment, the closed eyelids trembled, and the nostril quivered, and the faintest shadow of a smile was seen.

"Mamma!" cried the child, sobbing aloud. "O dear mamma! O dear mamma!"

The doctor gently brushed the scattered ringlets of the child aside from the face and mouth of the mother. Alas, how calm they lay there, — how little breath there was to stir them!

Thus, clinging fast to that slight spar within her arms, the mother drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world.

II.

FLORENCE.

LITTLE Paul Dombey's foster-mother had led a lonely life herself, and had carried little Paul through it for some weeks, and had returned up stairs one day from a melancholy saunter through the dreary rooms, when, as she was sitting in her room, the door was slowly and quietly opened, and a dark-eyed little girl looked in.

"It 's Miss Florence come home from her aunt's, no doubt," thought Richards, who had never seen the child before. "Hope I see you well, miss."

"Is that my brother?" asked the child, pointing to the baby.

"Yes, my pretty," answered Richards. "Come and kiss him."

But the child, instead of advancing, looked her earnestly in the face, and said, —

"What have you done with my mamma?"

"I never saw such a melting thing in all my life!" said Richards, who naturally substituted for this child one of her own, inquiring for herself in like circumstances. "Come nearer here, my dear miss! Don't be afraid of me."

"I am not afraid of you," said the child, drawing nearer. "But I want to know what they have done with my mamma."

"My darling," said Richards, "you wear that pretty black frock in remembrance of your mamma."

"I can remember my mamma," returned the child, with tears springing to her eyes, "in any frock."

"But people put on black, to remember people when they 're gone."

"Where gone?" asked the child.

"Come and sit down by me," said Richards, "and I 'll tell you a story."

With a quick perception that it was intended to relate to what she had asked, little Florence laid aside the bonnet she had held in her hand until now, and sat down on a stool at the nurse's feet, looking up into her face.

"Once upon a time," said Richards, "there was a lady, — a very good lady, — and her little daughter dearly loved her."

"A very good lady, and her little daughter dearly loved her," repeated the child.

"Who, when God thought it right that it should be so, was taken ill and died."

The child shuddered.

"Died, never to be seen again by any one on

earth, and was buried in the ground where the trees grow."

"The cold ground!" said the child, shuddering again.

"No! the warm ground," returned Polly, seizing her advantage, "where the ugly little seeds turn into beautiful flowers, and into grass, and corn, and I don't know what all besides, — where good people turn into bright angels, and fly away to Heaven!"

The child, who had drooped her head, raised it again, and sat looking at her intently.

"So; let me see," said Polly, not a little flurried between this earnest scrutiny, her desire to comfort the child, her sudden success, and her very slight confidence in her own powers, — "so, when this lady died, wherever they took her, or wherever they put her, she went to GOD! and she prayed to him, this lady did," said Polly, affecting herself beyond measure, being heartily in earnest, "to teach her little daughter to be sure of that in her heart; and to know that she was happy there and loved her still; and to hope and try — oh, all her life — to meet her there one day, never, never, never to part any more."

"It was my mamma!" exclaimed the child, springing up, and clasping her round the neck.

"And the child's heart," said Polly, drawing her to her breast, — "the little daughter's heart was so

PAUL AND FLORENCE.

III.

LITTLE PAUL.

IN spite of his early promise, all vigilance and care could not make little Paul a thriving boy. Naturally delicate, perhaps, he pined and wasted after the dismissal of his nurse, and for a long time seemed but to wait his opportunity of gliding through their hands, and seeking his lost mother.

Thus Paul grew to be nearly five years old. He was a pretty little fellow; though there was something wan and wistful in his small face, that gave occasion to many significant shakes of Mrs. Wickam's head, and many long-drawn inspirations of Mrs. Wickam's breath. He was childish and sportive enough at times, and not of a sullen disposition; but he had a strange, old-fashioned, thoughtful way, at other times, of sitting brooding in his miniature armchair, when he looked (and talked) like one of those terrible little Beings in the fairy-tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted. He would frequently be stricken with this precocious mood up stairs in the nursery; and would sometimes lapse into it suddenly, exclaiming

that he was tired, even while playing with Florence. But at no time did he fall into it so surely as when, his little chair being carried down into his father's room, he sat there with him after dinner by the fire. They were the strangest pair at such a time that ever firelight shone upon. Mr. Dombey, so erect and solemn, gazing at the blaze; his little image, with an old, old face, peering into the red perspective with the fixed and rapt attention of a sage. Mr. Dombey entertaining complicated worldly schemes and plans; the little image entertaining Heaven knows what wild fancies, half-formed thoughts, and wandering speculations. Mr. Dombey, stiff with starch and arrogance; the little image by inheritance, and in unconscious imitation. The two so very much alike, and yet so monstrously contrasted.

On one of these occasions, when they had both been perfectly quiet for a long time, and Mr. Dombey only knew that the child was awake by occasionally glancing at his eye, where the bright fire was sparkling like a jewel, little Paul broke silence thus, —

"Papa, what 's money?"

The abrupt question had such immediate reference to the subject of Mr. Dombey's thoughts, that Mr. Dombey was quite disconcerted.

Looking down at the little chair, and seeing what a long way down it was, he answered, "Gold, and

silver, and copper. Guineas, shillings, half-pence. You know what they are?"

"O yes, I know what they are," said Paul. "I don't mean that, papa. I mean what's money, after all?"

Heaven and earth, how old his face was as he turned it up again towards his father's!

"What is money, after all?" said Mr. Dombey, backing his chair a little.

"I mean, papa, what can it do?" returned Paul, folding his arms (they were hardly long enough to fold), and looking at the fire, and up at him, and at the fire, and up at him again.

Mr. Dombey drew his chair back to its former place, and patted him on the head. "You 'll know better by and by, my man," he said. "Money, Paul, can do anything." He took hold of the little hand, and beat it softly against one of his own as he said so.

But Paul got his hand free as soon as he could; and rubbing it gently to and fro on the elbow of his chair, as if his wit were in the palm, and he were sharpening it,—and looking at the fire again, as though the fire had been his adviser and prompter, —repeated, after a short pause,—

"Anything, papa?"

"Yes. Anything — almost," said Mr. Dombey.

"Anything means everything, don't it, papa?" asked his son, not observing, or possibly not understanding, the qualification.

"It includes it, — yes," said Mr. Dombey.

"Why didn't money save me my mamma?" returned the child. "It isn't cruel, is it?"

"Cruel!" said Mr. Dombey, settling his neckcloth, and seeming to resent the idea. "No; a good thing can't be cruel."

"If it's a good thing, and can do anything," said the little fellow, thoughtfully, as he looked back at the fire, "I wonder why it didn't save me my mamma. It can't make me strong and quite well, either, papa, — can it?"

"You are as strong and well as such little people usually are. Eh?" said Mr. Dombey.

"Florence is older than I am, but I'm not as strong and well as Florence, I know," returned the child; "and I believe that when Florence was as little as me, she could play a great deal longer at a time without tiring herself. I am so tired sometimes," said little Paul, warming his hands, and looking in between the bars of the grate, as if some ghostly puppet-show were performing there, "and my bones ache so (Wickam says it's my bones) that I don't know what to do."

"Ay! but that's at night," said Mr. Dombey, drawing his own chair closer to his son's, and laying

his hand gently on his back; "little people should be tired at night, for then they sleep well."

"O, it 's not at night, papa," returned the child; "it 's in the day, and I lie down in Florence's lap, and she sings to me. At night, I dream about such cu-ri-ous things!"

And he went on, warming his hands again, and thinking about them, like an old man, or a young goblin, until the nurse appeared to summon him to bed.

"I want Florence to come for me," said Paul.

"Won't you come with your poor Nurse Wickam, Master Paul?" inquired that attendant, with great pathos.

"No, I won't," replied Paul, composing himself in his arm-chair again, like the master of the house.

Invoking a blessing upon his innocence, Mrs. Wickam withdrew, and presently Florence appeared in her stead. The child immediately started up with sudden readiness and animation, and raised towards his father, in bidding him good night, a countenance so much brighter, so much younger, and so much more childlike altogether, that Mr. Dombey, while he felt greatly reassured by the change, was quite amazed at it.

After they had left the room together, he thought he heard a soft voice singing; and, remembering that Paul had said his sister sung to him, he had the

curiosity to open the door and listen and look after them. She was toiling up the great, wide, vacant staircase, with him in her arms; his head was lying on her shoulder, one of his arms thrown negligently round her neck. So they went, toiling up; she singing all the way, and Paul sometimes crooning out a feeble accompaniment. Mr. Dombey looked after them until they reached the top of the staircase — not without halting to rest by the way — and passed out of his sight; and then he still stood gazing upward, until the dull rays of the moon, glimmering in a melancholy manner through the dim skylight, sent him back to his own room.

IV.

DR. BLIMBER'S SCHOOL.

WHEN Paul grew to be six years old, his father resolved that he should begin a vigorous course of education forthwith, to qualify him for the position in which he was to shine; and that Doctor Blimber should take him in hand immediately.

Whenever a young gentleman was taken in hand by Doctor Blimber, he might consider himself sure of a pretty tight squeeze. The Doctor only undertook the charge of ten young gentlemen, but he had always ready a supply of learning for a hundred on the lowest estimate; and it was at once the business and delight of his life to gorge the unhappy ten with it.

In fact, Doctor Blimber's establishment was a great hot-house, in which there was a forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green-peas were produced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year round. Mathematical gooseberries (very sour ones, too) were common at untimely seasons, and from mere sprouts of bushes, under Doctor

Blimber's cultivation. Every description of Greek and Latin vegetable was got off the driest twigs of boys, under the frostiest circumstances. Nature was of no consequence at all. No matter what a young gentleman was intended to bear, Doctor Blimber made him bear to pattern, somehow or other.

The Doctor was a portly gentleman in a suit of black, with strings at his knees, and stockings below them. He had a bald head, highly polished, a deep voice, and a chin so very double, that it was a wonder how he ever managed to shave into the creases.

The Doctor's was a mighty fine house, fronting the sea. Not a joyful style of house within, but quite the contrary. Sad-colored curtains, whose proportions were spare and lean, hid themselves despondently behind the windows. There was no sound through all the house but the ticking of a great clock in the hall, which made itself audible in the very garrets; and sometimes a dull cooing of young gentlemen at their lessons, like the murmurings of an assemblage of melancholy pigeons.

Miss Blimber, too, although a slim and graceful maid, did no soft violence to the gravity of the house. There was no light nonsense about Miss Blimber. She kept her hair short and crisp, and wore spectacles. She was dry and sandy with

working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss Blimber! They must be dead, — stone-dead, — and then Miss Blimber dug them up like a Ghoul.

Mrs. Blimber, her mamma, was not learned herself, but she pretended to be, and that did quite as well. She said, at evening parties, that if she could have known Cicero, she thought she could have died contented. It was the steady joy of her life to see the Doctor's young gentlemen go out walking, unlike all other young gentlemen, in the largest possible shirt-collars, and the stiffest possible cravats. It was so classical, she said.

As to Mr. Feeder, B. A., Doctor Blimber's assistant, he was a kind of human barrel-organ, with a little list of tunes at which he was continually working, over and over again, without any variation.

Upon the Doctor's door-steps, one day, Paul stood with a fluttering heart, and with his small right hand in his father's. His other hand was locked in that of Florence. How tight the tiny pressure of that one, and how loose and cold the other!

"Now, Paul," said Mr. Dombey, exultingly, "this is the way indeed to be Dombey and Son, and have money. You are almost a man already."

"Almost," returned the child.

Even his childish agitation could not master the

sly and quaint, yet touching, look with which he accompanied the reply.

It brought a vague expression of dissatisfaction into Mr. Dombey's face; but the door being opened, it was quickly gone.

"Doctor Blimber is at home, I believe?" said Mr. Dombey.

The Doctor was sitting in his study, with a globe at each knee, books all round him, Homer over the door, and Minerva on the mantel-shelf. "And how do you, sir?" he said to Mr. Dombey, "and how is my little friend?" Grave as an organ was the Doctor's speech; and when he ceased, the great clock in the hall seemed (to Paul, at least) to take him up, and to go on saying, "How, is, my, lit, tle, friend, how, is, my, lit, tle, friend," over and over and over again.

The little friend, being something too small to be seen at all, from where the Doctor sat, over the books on his table, the Doctor made several futile attempts to get a view of him round the legs; which Mr. Dombey perceiving, relieved the Doctor from his embarrassment by taking Paul up in his arms, and sitting him on another little table, over against the Doctor, in the middle of the room.

"Very well, I thank you, sir," returned Paul, answering the clock quite as much as the Doctor.

"Ha!" said Doctor Blimber. "Shall we make a man of him?"

"Do you hear, Paul?" added Mr. Dombey, Paul being silent.

"Shall we make a man of him?" repeated the Doctor.

"I had rather be a child," replied Paul.

"Indeed!" said the Doctor. "Why?"

The child sat on the table looking at him, with a curious expression of suppressed emotion in his face, and beating one hand proudly on his knee as if he had the rising tears beneath it, and crushed them. But his other hand strayed a little way the while, a little farther — farther from him yet — until it lighted on the neck of Florence. "This is why," it seemed to say, and then the steady look was broken up and gone; the working lip was loosened, and the tears came streaming forth.

"Never mind," said the Doctor, blandly nodding, — "ne-ver mind; we shall substitute new cares and new impressions, Mr. Dombey, very shortly. You would still wish my little friend to acquire —"

"Everything, if you please, Doctor," returned Mr. Dombey, firmly.

At this moment, there was a knock at the room-door.

"Who is that?" said the Doctor. "O, come in, Toots; come in. Mr. Dombey, sir." Toots

bowed. "Quite a coincidence!" said Doctor Blimber. "Here we have the beginning and the end. Alpha and Omega. Our head boy, Mr. Dombey."

The Doctor might have called him their head and shoulders boy, for he was at least that much taller than any of the rest. He blushed very much at finding himself among strangers, and chuckled aloud.

"An addition, Toots," said the Doctor. "Mr. Dombey's son."

Young Toots blushed again; and finding, from a solemn silence which prevailed, that he was expected to say something, said to Paul, "How are you?" in a voice so deep, and a manner so sheepish, that if a lamb had roared it could n't have been more surprising.

"I think," said Mr. Dombey, "I have now given all the trouble I need, and may take my leave. Paul, my child," he went close to him, as he sat upon the table, "good by."

"Good by, papa."

The limp and careless little hand that Mr. Dombey took in his was singularly out of keeping with the wistful face. But he had no part in its sorrowful expression. It was not addressed to him. No, no; to Florence, all to Florence.

"How old are you, Dombey?" said Miss Blimber.

"Six," answered Paul, wondering, as he stole a

glance at the young lady, why her hair did n't grow long like Florence's, and why she was like a boy.

"How much do you know of your Latin Grammar, Dombey?" said Miss Blimber.

"None of it," answered Paul. Feeling that the answer was a shock to Miss Blimber's sensibility, he looked up at the three faces that were looking down at him, and said, —

"I have n't been well. I have been a weak child. I could n't learn a Latin Grammar when I was out every day with old Glubb. I wish you 'd tell old Glubb to come and see me, if you please."

"What a dreadfully low name!" said Mrs. Blimber. "Unclassical to a degree! Who is the monster, child?"

"What monster?" inquired Paul.

"Glubb," said Mrs. Blimber, with a great disrelish.

"He 's no more a monster than you are," returned Paul.

"What!" cried the Doctor, in a terrible voice. "Ay, ay, ay? Aha! What 's that?"

Paul was dreadfully frightened; but still he made a stand for the absent Glubb, though he did it trembling.

"He 's a very nice old man, ma'am," he said. "He used to draw my coach. He knows all about the deep sea, and the fish that are in it, and the

great monsters that come and lie on rocks in the sun, and dive into the water again when they 're startled, blowing and splashing so, that they can be heard for miles. There are some creatures," said Paul, warming with his subject, "I don't know how many yards long, and I forget their names, but Florence knows, that pretend to be in distress; and when a man goes near them, out of compassion, they open their great jaws and attack him. But all he has got to do," said Paul, boldly tendering this information to the very Doctor himself, "is to keep on turning as he runs away, and then, as they turn slowly, because they are so long, and can't bend, he 's sure to beat them. And, though old Glubb don't know why the sea should make me think of my mamma that 's dead, or what it is that it is always saying — always saying! — he knows a great deal about it. And I wish," the child concluded, with a sudden falling of his countenance, and failing in his animation, as he looked like one forlorn upon the three strange faces, "that you 'd let old Glubb come here to see me, for I know him very well, and he knows me."

"Ha!" said the Doctor, shaking his head, "this is bad, but study will do much. Take him round the house, Cornelia, and familiarize him with his new sphere. Go with that young lady, Dombey."

V.

PAUL'S ILLNESS AND DEATH.

CORNELIA had always brought him on as vigorously as she could, and Paul had had a hard life of it. But over and above the getting through his tasks, he had long had another purpose always present to him, and to which he still held fast. It was, to be a gentle, useful, quiet little fellow, always striving to secure the love and attachment of the rest; and, though he was yet often to be seen watching the waves and clouds from his solitary window, he was oftener found, too, among the other boys, modestly rendering them some little voluntary service. Thus it came to pass, that even Paul was an object of general interest, — a fragile little plaything that they all liked, and that no one would have thought of treating roughly.

Paul's head, which had long been ailing more or less, and was sometimes very heavy and painful, felt so uneasy one night that he was obliged to support it on his hand. And yet it drooped so, that by little and little it sunk on Mr. Toots's knee, and rested there, as if it had no care to be ever lifted up again.

That was no reason why he should be deaf; but he must have been, he thought, for by and by he heard Mr. Feeder calling in his ear, and gently shaking him to rouse his attention. And when he raised his head, quite scared, and looked about him, he found that Dr. Blimber had come into the room, and that the window was open, and that his forehead was wet with sprinkled water; though how all this had been done without his knowledge, was very curious indeed.

"Ah! Come, come! That's well! How is my little friend now?" said Doctor Blimber, encouragingly.

"O, quite well, thank you, sir," said Paul.

But there seemed to be something the matter with the floor, for he could n't stand upon it steadily; and with the walls, too, for they were inclined to turn round and round, and could only be stopped by being looked at very hard indeed.

It was very kind of Mr. Toots to carry him to the top of the house so tenderly; and Paul told him that it was. But Mr. Toots said he would do a great deal more than that if he could; and indeed he did more as it was, for he helped Paul to undress, and helped him to bed in the kindest manner possible, and then sat down by the bedside and chuckled very much.

Paul never rose from his little bed. He lay

there, listening to the noises in the street, quite tranquilly; not caring much how the time went, but watching it, and watching everything about him with observing eyes.

When the sunbeams struck into his room through the rustling blinds, and quivered on the opposite wall like golden water, he knew that evening was coming on, and that the sky was red and beautiful. As the reflection died away, and a gloom went creeping up the wall, he watched it deepen, deepen, deepen into night. Then he thought how the long streets were dotted with lamps, and how the peaceful stars were shining overhead. His fancy had a strange tendency to wander to the river, which he knew was flowing through the great city; and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the hosts of stars, — and, more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea.

When day began to dawn again, he watched for the sun; and when its cheerful light began to sparkle in the room, he pictured to himself — pictured! he saw — the high church towers rising up into the morning sky, the town reviving, waking, starting into life once more, the river glistening as it rolled (but rolling fast as ever), and the country bright with dew. Familiar sounds and cries came by degrees into the street below; the servants in the

house were roused and busy; faces looked in at the door, and voices asked his attendants softly how he was. Paul always answered for himself, "I am better. I am a great deal better, thank you. Tell papa so."

How many times the golden water danced upon the wall,— how many nights the dark, dark river rolled towards the sea in spite of him,— Paul never counted, never sought to know. If their kindness, or his sense of it, could have increased, they were more kind, and he more grateful, every day; but whether there were many days or few, appeared of little moment now to the gentle boy.

One night he had been thinking of his mother, and her picture in the drawing-room down stairs, and had thought she must have loved sweet Florence better than his father did, to have held her in her arms when she felt that she was dying; for even he, her brother, who had such dear love for her, could have no greater wish than that. The train of thought suggested to him to inquire if he had ever seen his mother, for he could not remember whether they had told him yes, or no,— the river running very fast, and confusing his mind.

"Floy, did I ever see mamma?"

"No, darling; why?"

"Floy," he said, "come close to me, and let me see you!"

Sister and brother wound their arms around each other, and the golden light came streaming in, and fell upon them, locked together.

"How fast the river runs, between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But it 's very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!"

Presently he told her that the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them, and how tall the rushes! Now the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now there was a shore before him. Who stood on the bank! —

He put his hands together, as he had been used to do, at his prayers. He did not remove his arms to do it; but they saw him fold them so, behind her neck.

"Mamma is like you, Floy. I know her by the face! But tell them that the print upon the stairs at school is not divine enough. The light about the head is shining on me as I go!"

VI.

MR. TOOTS'S VISIT.

AT first, when the house subsided into its accustomed course, and they had all gone away, except the servants, and her father shut up in his own rooms, Florence could do nothing but weep, and wander up and down, and sometimes, in a sudden pang of desolate remembrance, fly to her own chamber, wring her hands, lay her face down on her bed, and know no consolation, — nothing but the bitterness and cruelty of grief.

But it is not in the nature of pure love to burn so fiercely and unkindly long.

One day, about a week after the funeral, Florence was sitting at her work, when Susan appeared, with a face half laughing and half crying, to announce a visitor.

"A visitor! To me, Susan!" said Florence, looking up in astonishment.

"Well, it *is* a wonder, ain't it now, Miss Floy?" said Susan; "but I wish you had a many visitors, I do, indeed, for you'd be all the better for it, and it's my opinion that the sooner you and me goes even to them old Skettleses, miss, the better for

both. I may not wish to live in crowds, Miss Floy, but still I 'm not a oyster."

To do Miss Nipper justice, she spoke more for her young mistress than herself, and her face showed it.

"But the visitor, Susan," said Florence.

Susan, with an hysterical explosion that was as much a laugh as a sob, and as much a sob as a laugh, answered, —

"Mr. Toots!"

The smile that appeared on Florence's face passed from it in a moment, and her eyes filled with tears. But at any rate it was a smile, and that gave great satisfaction to Miss Nipper.

"My own feelings exactly, Miss Floy," said Susan, putting her apron to her eyes, and shaking her head. "Immediately I see that Innocent in the hall, Miss Floy, I burst out laughing first, and then I choked."

Susan Nipper involuntarily proceeded to do the like again on the spot. In the mean time, Mr. Toots, who had come up stairs after her, all unconscious of the effect he produced, announced himself with his knuckles on the door, and walked in very briskly.

"How d' ye do, Miss Dombey?" said Mr. Toots. "I 'm very well, I thank you; how are you?"

Mr. Toots — than whom there were few better fellows in the world, though there may have been

FLORENCE DOMBEY.

one or two brighter spirits — had laboriously invented this long burst of discourse with the view of relieving the feelings both of Florence and himself. But finding that he had run through his property, as it were, in an injudicious manner, by squandering the whole before taking a chair, or before Florence had uttered a word, or before he had well got in at the door, he deemed it advisable to begin again.

"How d' ye do, Miss Dombey?" said Mr. Toots.

"I 'm very well, I thank you; how are you?"

Florence gave him her hand, and said she was very well.

"I 'm very well, indeed," said Mr. Toots, taking a chair. "Very well, indeed, I am. I don't remember," said Mr. Toots, after reflecting a little, "that I was ever better, thank you."

"It 's very kind of you to come," said Florence, taking up her work. "I am very glad to see you."

Mr. Toots responded with a chuckle. Thinking that might be too lively, he corrected it with a sigh. Thinking that might be too melancholy, he corrected it with a chuckle. Not thoroughly pleasing himself with either mode of reply, he breathed hard.

"You were very kind to my dear brother," said Florence, obeying her own natural impulse to relieve him by saying so. "He often talked to me about you."

"O, it 's of no consequence," said Mr. Toots hastily. "Warm, ain't it?"

"It is beautiful weather," replied Florence.

"It agrees with *me!*" said Mr. Toots. "I don't think I ever was so well as I find myself at present, I 'm obliged to you."

After stating this curious and unexpected fact, Mr. Toots fell into a deep well of silence.

"You have left Doctor Blimber's, I think?" said Florence, trying to help him out.

"I should hope so," returned Mr. Toots. And tumbled in again.

He remained at the bottom, apparently drowned, for at least ten minutes. At the expiration of that period, he suddenly floated, and said, —

"Well! good morning, Miss Dombey."

"Are you going?" asked Florence, rising.

"I don't know, though. No, not just at present," said Mr. Toots, sitting down again, most unexpectedly. "The fact is — I say, Miss Dombey!"

"Don't be afraid to speak to me," said Florence, with a quiet smile; "I should be very glad if you would talk about my brother."

"Would you, though?" retorted Mr. Toots, with sympathy in every fibre of his otherwise expressionless face. "Poor Dombey! I 'm sure I never thought that Burgess & Co. — fashionable tailors (but very dear), that we used to talk about — would

make this suit of clothes for such a purpose." Mr. Toots was dressed in mourning. "Poor Dombey! I say! Miss Dombey!" blubbered Toots.

"Yes," said Florence.

"There 's a friend he took to very much at last. I thought you 'd like to have him, perhaps, as a sort of keepsake. You remember his remembering my dog Diogenes?"

"O yes! O yes!" cried Florence.

"Poor Dombey! So do I," said Mr. Toots.

Mr. Toots, seeing Florence in tears, had great difficulty in getting beyond this point, and had nearly tumbled into the well again. But a chuckle saved him on the brink.

"I say," he proceeded, "Miss Dombey! If you 'd like to have him, he 's at the door. I brought him on purpose for you. He ain't a lady's dog, you know," said Mr. Toots, "but you won't mind that, will you?"

And when Diogenes, released, came tearing up the stairs and bouncing into the room, (such a business as there was, first, to get him out of the cabriolet!) dived under all the furniture, and wound a long iron chain, that dangled from his neck, round legs of chairs and tables, and then tugged at it until his eyes became unnaturally visible, in consequence of their nearly starting out of his head; and when he growled at Mr. Toots, who affected famil-

iarity, and went pell-mell at Towlinson, the servant, morally convinced that he was the enemy whom he had barked at round the corner all his life, and had never seen yet, — Florence was as pleased with him as if he had been a miracle of discretion.

Mr. Toots was so overjoyed by the success of his present, and was so delighted to see Florence bending down over Diogenes, smoothing his coarse back with her little delicate hand, — Diogenes graciously allowing it from the first moment of their acquaintance, — that he felt it difficult to take leave, and would, no doubt, have been a much longer time in making up his mind to do so, if he had not been assisted by Diogenes himself, who suddenly took it into his head to bay Mr. Toots, and to make short runs at him with his mouth open. Not exactly seeing his way to the end of these demonstrations, and sensible that they placed the pantaloons constructed by the art of Burgess & Co. in jeopardy, Mr. Toots, with chuckles, lapsed out at the door, by which, after looking in again two or three times without any object at all, and being on each occasion greeted with a fresh run from Diogenes, he finally took himself off and got away.

VII.

FLORENCE'S MARRIAGE.

[Mr. Dombey's unkindness to his daughter grew so great at last, that she had to flee from his house, and take refuge with an old friend. After she grew to womanhood, she became the wife of Walter Gay, who had been her friend in childhood. Just before her marriage she had an unexpected visit from Susan Nipper, her early attendant.]

"O MY own pretty darling sweet Miss Floy!" cried the Nipper, running into Florence's room, "to think that it should come to this and I should find you here my own dear dove with nobody to wait upon you and no home to call your own but never never will I go away Miss Floy for though I may not gather moss I 'm not a rolling stone nor is my heart a stone or else it would n't bust as it is busting now O dear O dear!"

Pouring out these words, without the faintest indication of a stop of any sort, Miss Nipper, on her knees beside her mistress, hugged her close.

"Susan! dear, good Susan!" said Florence.

"O, bless her! I that was her little maid when she was a little child! and is she really, really truly going to be married?" exclaimed Susan, in a burst

of pain and pleasure, pride and grief, and Heaven knows how many other conflicting feelings.

"Who told you so?" said Florence.

"O gracious me! that innocentest creature Toots," returned Susan, hysterically. "I knew he must be right, my dear, because he took on so. He's the devotedest and innocentest infant! And is my darling," pursued Susan, with another close embrace and burst of tears, "really, really going to be married!"

The mixture of compassion, pleasure, tenderness, protection, and regret with which the Nipper constantly recurred to this subject, and at every such recurrence raised her head to look in the young face and kiss it, and then laid her head again upon her mistress's shoulder, caressing her and sobbing, was as womanly and good a thing, in its way, as ever was seen in the world.

"There, there!" said the soothing voice of Florence, presently. "Now you're quite yourself, dear Susan!"

Miss Nipper, sitting down upon the floor at her mistress's feet, laughing and sobbing, holding her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes with one hand, and patting Diogenes with the other as he licked her face, confessed to being more composed, and laughed and cried a little more in proof of it.

"I — I — I never did see such a creetur as

that Toots," said Susan, "in all my born days, never!"

"So kind," suggested Florence.

"And so comic!" Susan sobbed.

Florence had now to prepare Susan for their approaching separation. This was a difficult task, as Miss Nipper was of a resolute disposition, and had fully made up her mind that she had come back never to be parted from her old mistress any more.

"As to wages, dear Miss Floy," she said, "you would n't hint and wrong me so as think of naming them, for I 've put money by, and would n't sell my love and duty at a time like this, even if the Savings' Banks and me were total strangers, or the Banks were broke to pieces; but you 've never been without me, darling, from the time your poor dear ma was took away, and though I 'm nothing to be boasted of, you 're used to me, and, O my own dear mistress through so many years, don't think of going anywhere without me, for it must n't and can't be!"

"Dear Susan, I am going on a long, long voyage."

"Well, Miss Floy, and what of that? the more you 'll want me. Lengths of voyages ain't an object in my eyes, thank God!" said the impetuous Susan Nipper.

"But, Susan, I am going with Walter, and I

would go with Walter anywhere — everywhere! Walter is poor, and I am very poor, and I must learn, now, both to help myself and help him."

"Dear Miss Floy!" cried Susan, bursting out afresh, and shaking her head violently, "it 's nothing new to you to help yourself, and others, too, and be the patientest and truest of noble hearts, but let me talk to Mr. Walter Gay, and settle it with him, for suffer you to go away across the world alone, I cannot, and I won't."

"Alone, Susan?" returned Florence. "Alone? and Walter taking me with him!" Ah, what a bright, amazed, enraptured smile was on her face! He should have seen it. "I am sure you will not speak to Walter if I ask you not," she added tenderly; "and pray don't, dear."

Susan sobbed, "Why not, Miss Floy?"

"Because," said Florence, "I am going to be his wife, to give him up my whole heart, and to live with him and die with him. He might think, if you said to him what you have said to me, that I am afraid of what is before me, or that you have some cause to be afraid for me. Why, Susan dear, I love him!"

Miss Nipper was so much affected by the quiet fervor of these words, and the simple, heartfelt, all-pervading earnestness expressed in them, and making the speaker's face more beautiful and pure than

ever, that she could only cling to her again, crying, "Was her little mistress really, really going to be married," and pitying, caressing, and protecting her, as she had done before.

Limited and plain as Florence's wardrobe was, there was a good deal to do in getting it ready, and Susan Nipper worked away at her side, all day, with the concentrated zeal of fifty seamstresses.

A few days have elapsed, and a stately ship is out at sea, spreading its white wings to the favoring wind.

Upon the deck, image to the roughest man on board of something that is graceful, beautiful, and harmless, — something that it is good and pleasant to have there, and that should make the voyage prosperous, — is Florence. It is night, and she and Walter sit alone, watching the solemn path of light upon the sea between them and the moon.

At length she cannot see it plainly for the tears that fill her eyes; and then she lays her head down on his breast, and puts her arms around his neck, saying, "O Walter, dearest love, I am so happy!"

Her husband holds her to his heart, and they are very quiet, and the stately ship goes on serenely.

"As I hear the sea," says Florence, "and sit watching it, it brings so many days into my mind. It makes me think so much —"

"Of Paul, my love. I know it does."

Of Paul and Walter. And the voices in the waves are always whispering to Florence, in their ceaseless murmuring, of love, — of love, eternal and illimitable, not bounded by the confines of this world, or by the end of time, but ranging still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away!

VIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

SEVERAL years have passed. Mr. Dombey is a white-haired gentleman, whose face bears heavy marks of care and suffering; but they are traces of a storm that has passed on forever, and left the clear evening in its track.

Ambitious projects trouble him no more. His only pride is in his daughter and her husband. He has a silent, thoughtful, quiet manner, and is always with his daughter.

In the old wine a new toast is drank, — "Mr. and Mrs. Toots!" And Susan, no longer "Nipper," but "Toots," listens smilingly, while her husband relates how it all came about.

Autumn days are shining, and on the sea-beach there are often a young lady and a white-haired gentleman. With them, or near them, are two children, — boy and girl. And an old dog is generally in their company.

The white-haired gentleman walks with the little boy, talks with him, helps him in his play, attends upon him, watches him, as if he were the object of his life. If he is thoughtful, the white-haired gen-

tleman is thoughtful, too; and sometimes when the child is sitting by his side, and looks up in his face, asking him questions, he takes the tiny hand in his, and, holding it, forgets to answer. Then the child says: —

"What, grandpapa, am I so like my poor little uncle again?"

"Yes, Paul. But he was weak, and you are very strong."

"O yes, I am very strong."

"And he lay on a little bed beside the sea, and you can run about."

And so they range away again, busily, for the white-haired gentleman likes best to see the child free and stirring; and as they go about together, the story of the bond between them goes about, and follows them.

But no one, except Florence, knows the measure of the white-haired gentleman's affection for the girl. That story never goes about. The child herself almost wonders at a certain secrecy he keeps in it. He hoards her in his heart. He cannot bear to see a cloud upon her face. He cannot bear to see her sit apart. He fancies that she feels a slight when there is none. He steals away to look at her in her sleep. It pleases him to have her come and wake him in the morning. He is fondest of her, and most loving to her, when there is no creature by. The child says then sometimes: —

"Dear grandpapa, why do you cry when you kiss me?"

He only answers, "Little Florence! Little Florence!" and smooths away the curls that shade her earnest eyes.

THE FAT BOY.

THE FAT BOY.

I.

THE MILITARY REVIEW.

THE whole population of Rochester and the adjoining towns rose from their beds at an early hour one morning, in a state of the utmost bustle and excitement. A grand review was to take place upon the lines. The manœuvres of half a dozen regiments were to be inspected by the eagle eye of the commander-in-chief; temporary fortifications had been erected, the citadel was to be attacked and taken, and a mine was to be sprung.

Mr. Pickwick was an enthusiastic admirer of the army. Nothing could have been more delightful to him — nothing could have harmonized so well with the peculiar feeling of each of his companions — as this sight. Accordingly they were soon afoot, and walking in the direction of the scene of action, towards which crowds of people were already pouring from a variety of quarters.

A few moments of eager expectation, and colors were seen fluttering gayly in the air, arms glistened

brightly in the sun; column after column poured on to the plain. The troops halted and formed; the word of command rung through the line; there was a general clash of muskets, as arms were presented; and the commander-in-chief, attended by Colonel Bulder and numerous officers, cantered to the front. The military bands struck up all together; the horses stood upon two legs each, cantered backwards, and whisked their tails about in all directions; the dogs barked, the mob screamed, the troops recovered, and nothing was to be seen on either side, as far as the eye could reach, but a long perspective of red coats and white trousers, fixed and motionless.

Mr. Pickwick had been so fully occupied in falling about, and disentangling himself, miraculously, from between the legs of horses, that he had not enjoyed sufficient leisure to observe the scene before him, until it assumed the appearance we have just described. When he was at last enabled to stand firmly on his legs, his gratification and delight were unbounded.

"We are in a capital situation now," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. The crowd had gradually dispersed from their immediate vicinity, and they were nearly alone.

"Capital!" echoed both Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle.

"What are they doing now?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, adjusting his spectacles.

"I — I — rather think," said Mr. Winkle, changing color, — "I rather think they 're going to fire."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"I — I — really think they are," urged Mr. Snodgrass, somewhat alarmed.

"Impossible," replied Mr. Pickwick. He had hardly uttered the word, when the whole half-dozen regiments levelled their muskets as if they had but one common object, and that object the Pickwickians; and burst forth with the most awful and tremendous discharge that ever shook the earth to its centre, or an elderly gentleman off his.

The firing ceased; but a quick movement was visible in the line; the hoarse shout of the word of command ran along it, and, before either of the party could form a guess at the meaning of this new manœuvre, the whole of the half-dozen regiments, with fixed bayonets, charged at double-quick time down upon the very spot on which Mr. Pickwick and his friends were stationed.

Mr. Pickwick and his two companions found themselves suddenly enclosed between two lines of great length, — the one advancing at a rapid pace, and the other firmly waiting the collision in hostile array.

"Hoi!" shouted the officers of the advancing line.

"Get out of the way," cried the officers of the stationary one.

"Where are we to go?" screamed the agitated Pickwickians.

"Hoi — hoi — hoi," was the only reply. There was a moment of intense bewilderment, a heavy tramp of footsteps, a violent concussion; a smothered laugh, — the half-dozen regiments were half a thousand yards off; and the soles of Mr. Pickwick's boots were elevated in air.

Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle had each performed a compulsory summerset with remarkable agility, when the first object that met the eyes of the latter as he sat on the ground, stanching with a yellow silk handkerchief the stream of life which issued from his nose, was his venerated leader at some distance off, running after his own hat, which was gambolling playfully away in perspective.

There was a fine gentle wind, and Mr. Pickwick's hat rolled sportively before it. The wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed, and the hat rolled over and over as merrily as a lively porpoise in a strong tide; and on it might have rolled, far beyond Mr. Pickwick's reach, had not its course been providentially stopped just as that gentleman was on the point of resigning it to its fate.

Mr. Pickwick, we say, was completely exhausted and about to give up the chase, when the hat was

blown with some violence against the wheel of a carriage. Mr. Pickwick, perceiving his advantage, darted briskly forward, secured his property, planted it on his head, and paused to take breath. He had not been stationary half a minute when he heard his own name eagerly pronounced by a voice which he at once recognized as Mr. Tupman's, and, looking upwards, he beheld a sight which filled him with surprise and pleasure.

In an open barouche, the horses of which had been taken out, the better to accommodate it to the crowded place, stood a stout old gentleman, in a blue coat and bright buttons, corduroy breeches and top-boots, two young ladies in scarfs and feathers, a young gentleman apparently enamored of one of the young ladies in scarfs and feathers, a lady of doubtful age, probably the aunt of the aforesaid, and Mr. Tupman, as easy and unconcerned as if he had belonged to the family from the first moments of his infancy. Fastened up behind the barouche was a hamper of spacious dimensions, — one of those hampers which always awaken in a contemplative mind associations connected with cold fowls, tongue, and bottles of wine, — and on the box sat a fat and red-faced boy, in a state of somnolency, whom no speculative observer could have regarded for an instant without setting down as the official dispenser of the contents of the before-mentioned hamper, when

the proper time for their consumption should arrive.

Mr. Pickwick had bestowed a hasty glance on these interesting objects, when he was again greeted by his faithful disciple.

"Pickwick — Pickwick," said Mr. Tupman; "come up here. Make haste."

"Come along, sir. Pray come up," said the stout gentleman. "Joe! — bless that boy, he 's gone to sleep again, — Joe, let down the steps." The fat boy rolled slowly off the box, let down the steps, and held the carriage door invitingly open. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle came up at the moment.

"Room for you all, gentlemen," said the stout man. "Two inside, and one out. Joe, make room for one of these gentlemen on the box. Now, sir, come along"; and the stout gentleman extended his arm, and pulled first Mr. Pickwick, and then Mr. Snodgrass, into the barouche by main force. Mr. Winkle mounted to the box, the fat boy waddled to the same perch, and fell fast asleep instantly.

There was such a ramming down of the contents of enormous guns on the battery, with instruments like magnified mops; such a preparation before they were let off, and such an awful noise when they did go, that the air resounded with the screams of ladies. Everybody was excited, except the fat boy, and he

slept as soundly as if the roaring of cannon were his ordinary lullaby.

"Joe, Joe!" said the stout gentleman, when the citadel was taken, and the besiegers and besieged sat down to dinner. "Bless that boy; he 's gone to sleep again. Be good enough to pinch him, sir, — in the leg, if you please; nothing else wakes him, — thank you. Undo the hamper, Joe."

The fat boy, who had been effectually roused by the compression of a portion of his leg between the finger and thumb of Mr. Winkle, rolled off the box once again, and proceeded to unpack the hamper, with more expedition than could have been expected from his previous inactivity.

The stout gentleman proceeded to hand the things from the fat boy (who had mounted up behind for the purpose) into the carriage.

"Now, Joe, knives and forks." The knives and forks were handed in, and the ladies and gentlemen inside, and Mr. Winkle on the box, were each furnished with those useful implements.

"Plates, Joe, plates." A similar process employed in the distribution of the crockery.

"Now, Joe, the fowls. Bless that boy; he 's gone to sleep again. Joe! Joe!" Sundry taps on the head with a stick, and the fat boy, with some difficulty, roused from his lethargy. "Come, hand in the eatables."

There was something in the sound of the last word which roused the unctuous boy. He jumped up; and the leaden eyes which twinkled behind his mountainous cheeks leered lovingly upon the food as he unpacked it from the basket.

"Now, make haste," said Mr. Wardle; for the fat boy was hanging fondly over a capon, which he seemed wholly unable to part with. The boy sighed deeply, and, bestowing an ardent gaze upon its plumpness, unwillingly consigned it to his master.

"That 's right — look sharp. Now the tongue, — now the pigeon-pie. Take care of that veal and ham — mind the lobsters — take the salad out of the cloth — give me the dressing." Such were the hurried orders which issued from the lips of Mr. Wardle as he handed in the different articles described, and placed dishes in everybody's hands, and on everybody's knees, in endless number.

"Now, ain't this capital?" inquired that jolly personage, when the work of destruction had commenced.

"Capital!" said Mr. Winkle, who was carving a fowl on the box.

"Glass of wine?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

"You 'd better have a bottle to yourself, up there, had n't you?"

"You 're very good."

"Joe!"

"Yes, sir." He was n't asleep this time, having just succeeded in abstracting a veal patty.

"Bottle of wine to the gentleman on the box. Glad to see you, sir. Bless that boy," said the old gentleman; "he 's gone to sleep again."

"Very extraordinary boy, that," said Mr. Pickwick; "does he always sleep in this way?"

"Sleep!" said the old gentleman; "he 's always asleep. Goes on errands fast asleep, and snores as he waits at table."

"How very odd!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah! odd, indeed," returned the old gentleman; "I 'm proud of that boy — would n't part with him on any account — he 's a natural curiosity! Here, Joe — Joe — take these things away, and open another bottle — d' ye hear?"

The fat boy rose, opened his eyes, swallowed the huge piece of pie he had been in the act of masticating when he last fell asleep, and slowly obeyed his master's orders. The fresh bottle was produced, and speedily emptied; the hamper was made fast in its old place — the fat boy once more mounted the box — the spectacles and pocket-glass were again adjusted — and the evolutions of the military recommenced. There was a great fizzing and banging of guns, and starting of ladies — and then a mine was sprung, to the gratification of everybody — and when

the mine had gone off, the military and the company followed its example, and went off too.

"Now, mind," said the old gentleman, as he shook hands with Mr. Pickwick at the conclusion of a conversation which had been carried on at intervals, during the conclusion of the proceedings, "we shall see you all to-morrow."

"Most certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"You have got the address?"

"Manor Farm, Dingley Dell," said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his pocket-book.

"That's it," said the old gentleman. "I don't let you off, mind, under a week, and undertake that you shall see everything worth seeing. If you've come down for a country life, come to me, and I'll give you plenty of it. Joe — bless that boy, he's gone to sleep again — Joe, help Tom put in the horses."

The horses were put in — the driver mounted — the fat boy clambered up by his side — farewells were exchanged — and the carriage rattled off. As the Pickwickians turned round to take a last glimpse of it, the setting sun cast a rich glow on the faces of their entertainers, and fell upon the form of the fat boy. His head was sunk upon his bosom; and he slumbered again.

II.

VISIT TO MANOR FARM.

AS brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians assemble on the morning of the twenty-second day of December.

The portmanteaus and carpet-bags have been stowed away, and Mr. Weller and the guard are endeavoring to insinuate into the fore-boot a huge codfish several sizes too large for it, which is snugly packed up, in a long brown basket, with a layer of straw over the top, and which has been left to the last, in order that he may repose in safety on the half-dozen barrels of real native oysters, all the property of Mr. Pickwick, which have been arranged in regular order, at the bottom of the receptacle.

Mr. Pickwick struggles up on one side, Mr. Tupman on the other, Mr. Winkle cries, "All right," and off they start. Shawls are pulled up, coat-collars are readjusted, the pavement ceases, the houses disappear, and they are once again dashing along the open road, with the fresh clear air blowing in their faces, and gladdening their very hearts within them.

Such was the progress of Mr. Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph, on their way to Dingley Dell; and at three o'clock that afternoon, they all stood, high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, upon the steps of the Blue Lion.

Mr. Pickwick was busily engaged in counting the barrels of oysters, and superintending the disinterment of the codfish, when he felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of the coat; and, looking round, he discovered that the individual who resorted to this mode of catching his attention was no other than Mr. Wardle's favorite page, better known to the readers of this unvarnished history by the distinguishing appellation of the fat boy.

"Aha!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Aha!" said the fat boy.

And as he said it, he glanced from the codfish to the oyster barrels, and chuckled joyously. He was fatter than ever.

"Well, you look rosy enough, my young friend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I've been asleep right in front of the tap-room fire," replied the fat boy, who had heated himself to the color of a new chimney-pot, in the course of an hour's nap. "Master sent me over with the chay-cart, to carry your luggage up to the house. He'd ha' sent some saddle-horses, but he thought you'd rather walk, being a cold day."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, — "yes, we would rather walk. Here, Sam."

"Sir," said Mr. Weller.

"Help Mr. Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart, and then ride on with him. We will walk forward at once."

Having given this direction, and settled with the coachman, Mr. Pickwick and his three friends struck into the footpath across the fields, and walked briskly away, leaving Mr. Weller and the fat boy confronted together for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, but without saying a word; and began to stow the things rapidly away in the cart, while the fat boy stood quietly by, and seemed to think it a very interesting sort of thing to see Mr. Weller working by himself.

"There," said Sam, throwing in the last carpet-bag. "There they are."

"Yes," said the fat boy, in a very satisfied tone, "there they are."

"Vell, young twenty stun," said Sam, "you 're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are."

"Thank'ee," said the fat boy.

"You ain't got nothin' on your mind, as makes you fret yourself, have you?" inquired Sam.

"Not as I knows on," replied the boy.

"I should raythe ha' thought, to look at you,

that you was a laboring under an unrequited attachment for some young 'ooman," said Sam.

The fat boy shook his head.

"Can you drive?" said he.

"I should raythe think so," replied Sam.

"There, then," said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hand, and pointing up a lane; "it's as straight as you can go; you can't miss it."

With these words, the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the codfish, and, placing an oyster barrel under his head for a pillow, fell asleep instantaneously.

"Vell," said Sam, "of all the cool boys ever I set my eyes on, this here young gen'l'm'n is about the coolest. Come, vake up, young Dropsy."

But as young Dropsy evinced no symptoms of returning animation, Sam Weller set himself down in front of the cart, and, starting the old horse with a jerk of the rein, jogged steadily on towards Manor Farm.

III.

THE VISIT RETURNED.

A VIOLENT and startling knocking was heard at the door of Mr. Perker's law office in London. It was not an ordinary double-knock, but a constant and uninterrupted succession of the loudest single raps, as if the knocker were endowed with the perpetual motion, or the person outside had forgotten to leave off.

"Dear me, what 's that?" exclaimed Perker, starting.

"I think it is a knock at the door," said Mr. Pickwick, — as if there could be the slightest doubt of the fact!

The knocker made a more energetic reply than words could have yielded, for it continued to hammer with surprising force and noise, without a moment's cessation.

The clerk, who was washing his hands in a dark closet, hurried to the door.

The object that presented itself to the eyes of the astonished clerk was a boy, — a wonderfully fat boy, — habited as a serving-lad, standing upright on the mat, with his eyes closed as if in sleep. He had nev-

er seen such a fat boy in or out of a travelling caravan; and this, coupled with the utter calmness and repose of his appearance, so very different from what was reasonably to have been expected of the inflicter of such knocks, smote him with wonder.

"What 's the matter?" inquired the clerk.

The extraordinary boy replied not a word, but he nodded once, and seemed, to the clerk's imagination, to snore feebly.

"Where do you come from?" inquired the clerk.

The boy made no sign. He breathed heavily, but in all other respects was motionless.

The clerk repeated the question thrice, and, receiving no answer, prepared to shut the door, when the boy suddenly opened his eyes, winked several times, sneezed once, and raised his hand as if to repeat the knocking. Finding the door open, he stared about him with great astonishment, and at length fixed his eyes on Mr. Lowten's face.

"What do you knock in that way for?" inquired the clerk, angrily.

"Which way?" said the boy, in a slow and sleepy voice.

"Why, like forty hackney-coachmen," replied the clerk.

"Because master said I was n't to leave off knocking till they opened the door, for fear I should go to sleep," said the boy.

"Well," said the clerk, "what message have you brought?"

"He 's down stairs," rejoined the boy.

"Who?"

"Master. He wants to know whether you 're at home."

All further inquiries were superseded by the appearance of old Wardle, who, running up stairs, and just recognizing Lowten, passed at once into Mr. Perker's room.

"Well," said Wardle, "here are pretty goings on, — a pinch of your snuff, Perker, my boy, — never were such times, eh?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, that Winkle should have gone off quietly and married the pretty Arabella."

Mr. Pickwick smiled benevolently, as if he had enjoyed for some time the contemplation of this fact.

"And then my daughter Bella set herself down by my side the other evening, and began to talk over this marriage; but I never could spin out a story," said Wardle, abruptly. "It must come out sooner or later, and it 'll save us all a great deal of time if it comes at once. The long and the short of it is, then, that Bella at last mustered up courage to tell me that Emily was very unhappy; that she and your young friend Snodgrass had been in constant cor-

respondence and communication ever since last Christmas; and that she had very dutifully made up her mind to run away with him; so I hired a carriage at Muggleton, and, putting my own horses in it, came up to town, under pretence of bringing Emily to see Arabella, who, I learnt, was to pass her honeymoon with you at the George and Vulture."

"Miss Wardle is with you, then?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"To be sure she is," replied Wardle. "She is at Osborne's hotel, in the Adelphi, at this moment, unless your enterprising friend has run away with her since I came out this morning."

As Wardle had business to transact in the city, they sent the carriage and the fat boy to his hotel, with the information that he and Mr. Pickwick would return together to dinner at five o'clock.

Charged with this message, the fat boy returned, slumbering as peaceably in his dickey over the stones as if it had been a down bed on watch-springs. By some extraordinary miracle, he awoke of his own accord, when the coach stopped, and, giving himself a good shake to stir up his faculties, went up stairs to execute his commission.

Now whether the shake had jumbled the fat boy's faculties together instead of arranging them in proper order, or had roused such a quantity of new ideas within him as to render him oblivious of ordinary

forms and ceremonies, or (which is also possible) had proved unsuccessful in preventing his falling asleep as he ascended the stairs, it is an undoubted fact that he walked into the sitting-room without previously knocking at the door, and so beheld a gentleman with his arm clasping his young mistress's waist, sitting very lovingly by her side on a sofa, while Arabella and Mary, her pretty handmaid, feigned to be absorbed in looking out of a window at the other end of the room. At sight of which phenomenon, the fat boy uttered an interjection, the ladies a scream, and the gentleman an oath, almost simultaneously.

"Wretched creature, what do you want here?" said the gentleman, who, it is needless to say, was Mr. Snodgrass.

To this the fat boy, considerably terrified, briefly responded, "Missis."

"What do you want me for?" inquired Emily, turning her head aside; "you stupid creature!"

"Master and Mr. Pickwick is a going to dine here at five," replied the fat boy.

"Leave the room," said Mr. Snodgrass, glaring upon the bewildered youth.

"No, no, no!" added Emily, hastily. "Bella, dear, advise me.

Upon this, Emily and Mr. Snodgrass, and Arabella and Mary, crowded into a corner and conversed ear-

nestly in whispers for some minutes, during which the fat boy dozed.

"Joe," said Arabella, at length, looking round with a most bewitching smile, "how do you do, Joe?"

"Joe," said Emily, "you 're a very good boy; I won't forget you, Joe."

"Joe," said Mr. Snodgrass, advancing to the astonished youth, and seizing his hand, "I did n't know you before. There 's five shillings for you, Joe."

"I 'll owe you five, Joe," said Arabella, "for old acquaintance' sake, you know," and another most captivating smile was bestowed upon the corpulent intruder.

The fat boy's perception being slow, he looked rather puzzled at first to account for this sudden prepossession in his favor, and stared about him in a very alarming manner. At length his broad face began to show symptoms of a grin of proportionately broad dimensions, and then thrusting half a crown into each of his pockets, and a hand and wrist after it, he burst into a horse laugh, being for the first and only time in his existence.

"He understands us, I see," said Arabella.

"He had better have something to eat immediately," remarked Emily.

The fat boy almost laughed again when he heard this suggestion. Mary, after a little more whispering, tripped forth from the group, and said: —

THE FAT BOY.

"I am going to dine with you to-day, sir, if you have no objection."

"This way," said the fat boy, eagerly. "There is such a jolly meat-pie!"

With these words, the fat boy led the way down stairs, his pretty companion captivating all the waiters and angering all the chambermaids as she followed him to the eating-room.

There was the meat-pie of which the youth had spoken so feelingly; and there were, moreover, a steak and a dish of potatoes and a pot of porter.

The fat boy assisted Mary to a little, and himself to a great deal, and was just going to begin eating, when he suddenly laid down his knife and fork, leaned forward in his chair, and letting his hands, with the knife and fork in them, fall on his knees, said, very slowly,—

"I say, how nice you look!"

"Dear me, Joseph," said Mary, affecting to blush, "what do you mean?"

The fat boy, gradually recovering his former position, replied with a heavy sigh, and, remaining thoughtful for a few moments, drank a long draught of the porter. Having achieved this feat, he sighed again, and applied himself assiduously to the pie.

"What a nice young lady Miss Emily is!" said Mary, after a long silence.

The fat boy had by this time finished the pie. He fixed his eyes on Mary, and replied, —

"I knows a nicerer."

"Indeed!" said Mary.

"Yes, indeed!" replied the fat boy, with unwonted vivacity.

"What 's her name?" inquired Mary.

"What 's yours?"

"Mary."

"So is hers," said the fat boy. "You 're her." The boy grinned to add point to the compliment, and put his eyes into something between a squint and a cast, which there is every reason to believe he intended for an ogle.

"I want to ask a favor of you, Joe. The ladies want you not to say anything to the old gentleman about the young gentleman having been up stairs; and I want you, too."

"Of course, I a'n't a going to," said the fat boy.

"You see," said Mary, "Mr. Snodgrass is very fond of Miss Emily, and Miss Emily 's very fond of him, and if you were to tell about it, the old gentleman would carry you all away miles into the country, where you 'd see nobody."

"No, no; I won't tell," said the fat boy, stoutly.

"That 's a dear," said Mary. "Now it 's time I went up stairs, and got my lady ready for dinner."

"Don't go yet," urged the fat boy.

"I must," replied Mary; "good by, for the present."

The fat boy, with elephantine playfulness, stretched out his arms to ravish a kiss; but as it required no great agility to elude him, his fair enslaver had vanished before he closed them again; upon which the apathetic youth ate a pound or so of steak with a sentimental countenance, and fell fast asleep.

There was so much to say up stairs, and there were so many plans to concert for elopement and matrimony in the event of old Wardle continuing to be cruel, that it wanted only half an hour to dinner when Mr. Snodgrass took his final adieu. The ladies ran to Emily's bedroom to dress, and the lover, taking up his hat, walked out of the room. He had scarcely got outside the door, when he heard Wardle's voice talking loudly; and, looking over the banisters, beheld him, followed by some other gentlemen, coming straight up stairs. Knowing nothing of the house, Mr. Snodgrass, in his confusion, stepped hastily back into the room he had just quitted, and, passing from thence into an inner apartment (Mr. Wardle's bedchamber), closed the door softly, just as the persons he had caught a glimpse of entered the sitting-room. These were Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle and Mr. Benjamin Allen, whom he had no difficulty in recognizing by their voices.

"Very lucky I had the presence of mind to avoid them," thought Mr. Snodgrass, with a smile, and walking on tiptoe to another door, near the bedside; "this opens into the same passage, and I can walk quietly and comfortably away."

There was only one obstacle to his walking quietly and comfortably away, which was, that the door was locked and the key gone.

"We won't wait a minute," said Wardle, looking at his watch. "Joe! why, bless the boy, he's awake!"

To the great distress of his master, the fat boy was, indeed, in a state of remarkable vigilance, his eyes being wide open, and looking as if they intended to remain so. There was an alacrity in his manner, too, which was equally unaccountable; every time his eyes met those of Emily or Arabella, he smirked and grinned; and once Wardle could have sworn he saw him wink.

"Joe," said Mr. Wardle after an unsuccessful search in all his pockets, "is my snuff-box on the sofa?"

"No, sir," replied the fat boy.

"O, I recollect; I left it on my dressing-table this morning," said Wardle. "Run into the next room and fetch it."

The fat boy went into the next room, and, having been absent about a minute, returned with the

snuff-box and the palest face that ever a fat boy wore.

"What's the matter with the boy?" exclaimed Wardle.

"Nothen's the matter with me," replied Joe, nervously.

The unfortunate youth had only interchanged a dozen words with Mr. Snodgrass, that gentleman having implored him to make a private appeal to some friend to release him, and then pushed him out with the snuff-box, lest his prolonged absence should lead to a discovery.

"Joe," said Wardle, "take this cheese to Mr. Pickwick."

Now Mr. Pickwick, being in the very best health and spirits, had been making himself perfectly delightful all dinner-time, and was at this moment engaged in an energetic conversation with Emily and Mr. Winkle; bowing his head courteously in the emphasis of his discourse, gently waving his left hand to lend force to his observations, and all glowing with placid smiles. He took a piece of cheese from the plate, and was upon the point of turning round to renew the conversation, when the fat boy, stooping so as to bring his head on a level with that of Mr. Pickwick, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and made the most horrible and hideous face that was ever seen out of a Christmas pantomime.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick, starting, "what a very — eh?" He stopped, for the fat boy had drawn himself up, and was, or pretended to be, fast asleep.

"What 's the matter?" inquired Wardle.

"This is such an extremely singular lad of yours," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking uneasily at the boy. "It seems an odd thing to say, but, upon my word, I am afraid that at times he is a little deranged."

"O Mr. Pickwick! pray don't say so," cried Emily and Arabella, both at once.

"I am not certain, of course," said Mr. Pickwick, amidst profound silence and looks of general dismay; "but his manner to me this moment was really very alarming. Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, suddenly jumping up with a short scream. "I beg your pardon, ladies, but at that moment he ran some sharp instrument into my leg. Really, he is not safe."

"He 's drunk," roared old Wardle, passionately. "Ring the bell; call the waiters! he 's drunk."

"I ain't," said the fat boy, falling on his knees as his master seized him by the collar. "I ain't drunk."

"Then you 're mad, — that 's worse. Call the waiters," said the old gentleman.

"I ain't mad: I'm sensible," rejoined the fat boy, beginning to cry.

"Then what did you run sharp instruments into Mr. Pickwick's legs for?" inquired Wardle, angrily.

"He would n't look at me," replied the boy. "I wanted to speak to him."

"Allow me," said Mr. Pickwick. "What did you wish to communicate to me, my poor boy?"

"I want to whisper to you," replied the fat boy.

"You want to bite his ear off, I suppose," said Wardle. "Don't come near him: he 's vicious. Ring the bell; and let him be taken down stairs."

Just as Mr. Winkle caught the bell-rope in his hand, it was arrested by a general expression of astonishment. The captive lover, his face burning with confusion, suddenly walked in and made a comprehensive bow to the company.

"Hallo!" cried Wardle, releasing the fat boy's collar, and staggering back. "What 's this!"

Mr. Snodgrass, who had only waited for a hearing, at once recounted how he had been placed in his then distressing predicament; how the fear of giving rise to domestic dissensions had alone prompted him to avoid Mr. Wardle on his first entrance; that he loved Mr. Wardle's daughter deeply and sincerely, that he was proud to avow that the feeling was mutual, and that if thousands of miles were placed between them, or oceans rolled their waters, he could never, for an instant, forget those happy days when first — et cetera, et cetera.

Having delivered himself to this effect, Mr. Snodgrass bowed again, looked into the crown of his hat, and stepped toward the door.

"Stop!" shouted Wardle. "Why, in the name of all that's —"

"Inflammable," mildly suggested Mr. Pickwick, who thought something worse was coming.

"Well — that's inflammable," said Wardle, adopting the substitute, "could n't you say all this to me in the first instance?"

"Or confide in me?" added Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear, dear," said Arabella, taking up the defence, "what is the use of asking all that now, especially when you know you had set your covetous old heart on a richer son-in-law, and are so wild and fierce beside, that everybody is afraid of you except me. Shake hands with him, and order him some dinner, for goodness gracious' sake, for he looks half starved; and pray have your wine up at once, for you'll not be tolerable until you have taken two bottles at least."

The worthy old gentleman pulled Arabella's ear, kissed her without the smallest scruple, kissed his daughter also with great affection, and shook Mr. Snodgrass warmly by the hand.

"She is right upon one point, at all events," said the old gentleman, cheerfully. "Ring for the wine."

The wine came, and Perker came up stairs at the same moment. Mr. Snodgrass had dinner at a side-table, and when he had despatched it, drew his chair next Emily, without the smallest opposition on the old gentleman's part.

TINY TIM.

TINY TIM.

ONCE upon a time — of all the good days in the year, on Christmas eve — old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather; foggy withal; and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement-stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already; it had not been light all day; and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighboring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come dropping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open, that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who, in

a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he could n't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly, that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I'm sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! what right have you to be merry? what reason have you to be merry? You 're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew, gayly. "What right have you to be dismal? what reason have you to be morose? You 're rich enough."

Scrooge, having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said "Bah!" again, and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books, and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" repeated the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it!"

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited,

I dare say," returned the nephew, "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, — apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that, — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded; becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark forever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*," said Scrooge, "and you 'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You 're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would n't!

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge; as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon."

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"I am sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute. We have never had a quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So, A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

"There 's another fellow," muttered Scrooge, who overheard him, — "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I 'll retire to Bedlam."

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You 'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, sir."

"It 's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it 's not fair. If I was to stop half a crown for it, you 'd think yourself ill-used, I 'll be bound?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!"

The clerk promised that he would, and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he

boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times in honor of its being Christmas eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blind-man's-buff.

Bob Cratchit had but fifteen "Bob" * a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the spirit of Christmas blessed his four-roomed house.

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and, getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honor of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's door they had smelt the goose and known it for their own; and, basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onions, these young Cratchits danced about the table and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he

* Shillings.

(not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes, bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father, then," said Mrs. Cratchit, "and your brother Tiny Tim? and Martha warn't so late last Christmas day by half an hour!"

"Here 's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here 's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There 's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her, with officious zeal.

"We 'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! never mind, so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no! There 's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, exclusive

of the fringe, hanging down before him, and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where 's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits, for he had been Tim's blood-horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant, —"not coming upon Christmas day!"

Martha did n't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in a joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper!

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remem-

ber upon Christmas day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs, as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby, compounded some hot mixture in a jug, and stirred it round and round, and put it on the hob to simmer, Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds, — a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course; and, in truth, it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner, at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and, mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should

shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board; and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife and feebly cried, "Hurrah!"

There never was such a goose. Bob said he did n't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone on the dish), they had n't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone — too nervous to bear witnesses — to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose, — a

supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered; flushed, but smiling proudly; with the pudding like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half a quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

O, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for so large a family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the

table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass, — two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed: —

"A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob; "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children; Christmas day."

"It should be Christmas day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake, and the day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! — he'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!"

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he did n't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five and sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he was deliberating what particular investments he should favor

when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest, — to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord was much about as tall as Peter; at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you could n't have seen his head if you had been there.

All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by and by they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time.

One day the noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner of their room, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

"The color hurts my eyes," she said.

The color? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

"They 're better now again," said Cratchit's wife. "It makes them weak by candle-light; and I would n't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time."

"Past it, rather," Peter answered, shutting up his book. "But I think he 's walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother."

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once: —

"I have known him walk with — I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed."

"And so have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"And so have I!" exclaimed another. So had all.

"But he was very light to carry," she resumed, intent upon her work, "and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble — no trouble. And there is your father at the door!"

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter — he had need of it, poor fellow — came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child, a little cheek against his face,

BOB CRATCHIT AND TINY TIM.

as if they said: "Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved!"

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you 'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He could n't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart, perhaps, than they were.

He left the room, and went up stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire and talked; the girls

and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little, — "just a little down, you know," said Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife.' By the by, how he ever knew that, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy!" cried Bob. "I hope they do. 'Heartily sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be of service any way,' he said, giving me his card, 'that's where I live. Pray come to me.' Now, it was n't," cried Bob, "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if you saw and spoke to him. I should n't be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter *a better situation.*"

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It 's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these days, though there 's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim, — shall we, — or this first parting that was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, — "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was, although he was a little, little child, we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, — "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

SMIKE.

SMIKE.

I.

DOTHEBOYS HALL.

[Nicholas Nickleby had become an assistant in a boarding-school for boys, in Yorkshire, England, called "Dotheboys Hall." He had arrived at night, and had gone at once to bed.]

A RIDE of two hundred and odd miles in severe weather is one of the best softeners of a hard bed that ingenuity can devise. Perhaps it is even a sweetener of dreams, for those which hovered over the rough couch of Nicholas, and whispered their airy nothings in his ear, were of an agreeable and happy kind. He was making his fortune very fast indeed, when the faint glimmer of an expiring candle shone before his eyes, and a voice he had no difficulty in recognizing as part and parcel of Mr. Squeers admonished him that it was time to rise.

"Past seven, Nickleby," said Mr. Squeers.

"Has morning come already?" asked Nicholas, sitting up in bed.

"Ah! that has it," replied Squeers, "and ready

iced too. Now, Nickleby, come; tumble up, will you?"

Nicholas needed no further admonition, but "tumbled up" at once, and proceeded to dress himself by the light of the taper which Mr. Squeers carried in his hand.

"Here 's a pretty go," said that gentleman; "the pump 's froze."

"Indeed!" said Nicholas, not much interested in the intelligence.

"Yes," replied Squeers. "You can't wash yourself this morning."

"Not wash myself!" exclaimed Nicholas.

"No, not a bit of it," rejoined Squeers, tartly. "So you must be content with giving yourself a dry polish till we break the ice in the well and can get a bucketful out for the boys. Don't stand staring at me, but do look sharp, will you?"

Offering no further observation, Nicholas huddled on his clothes. Squeers meanwhile opened the window and blew the candle out; when the voice of his amiable consort was heard in the passage, demanding admittance.

"Come in, my love," said Squeers.

Mrs. Squeers came in, still habited in the primitive night-jacket which had displayed the symmetry of her figure on the previous night, and further ornamented with a beaver bonnet of some antiquity,

which she wore, with much ease and lightness, on the top of the nightcap before mentioned.

"Drat the things," said the lady, opening the cupboard; "I can't find the school spoon anywhere."

"Never mind it, my dear," observed Squeers, in a soothing manner, "it 's of no consequence."

"No consequence! why, how you talk!" retorted Mrs. Squeers, sharply; "is n't it brimstone morning?"

"I forgot, my dear," rejoined Squeers; "yes, it certainly is. We purify the boys' blood now and then, Nickleby."

"Purify fiddlesticks' ends," said his lady. "Don't think, young man, that we go to the expense of flower of brimstone and molasses, just to purify them; because if you think we carry on the business in that way, you 'll find yourself mistaken, and so I tell you plainly."

"My dear," said Squeers, frowning. "Hem!"

"O nonsense!" rejoined Mrs. Squeers. "If the young man comes to be a teacher here, let him understand, once for all, that we don't want any foolery about the boys. They have the brimstone and treacle, partly because if they had n't something or other in the way of medicine they 'd be always ailing and giving a world of trouble, and partly because it spoils their appetites and comes cheaper than

breakfast and dinner. So it does them good and us good at the same time, and that's fair enough, I 'm sure."

"But come," said Squeers, interrupting the progress of some thoughts in the mind of his usher, "let's go to the school-room; and lend me a hand with my school-coat, will you?"

Nicholas assisted his master to put on an old fustian shooting-jacket, which he took down from a peg in a passage; and Squeers, arming himself with his cane, led the way across a yard to a door in the rear of the house.

"There," said the schoolmaster, as they stepped in together, "this is our shop, Nickleby."

It was such a crowded scene, and there were so many objects to attract attention, that at first Nicholas stared about him, really without seeing anything at all. By degrees, however, the place resolved itself into a bare and dirty room with a couple of windows, whereof a tenth part might be of glass, the remainder being stopped up with old copy-books and paper. There were a couple of long old rickety desks, cut and notched and inked and damaged in every possible way, two or three forms, a detached desk for Squeers, and another for his assistant.

But the pupils, — the young noblemen! How the last faint traces of hope, the remotest glimmering of any good to be derived from his efforts in this den,

faded from the mind of Nicholas as he looked in dismay around! Pale and haggard faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men, deformities with irons upon their limbs, boys of stunted growth, and others whose long, meagre legs would hardly bear their stooping bodies, all crowded on the view together.

And yet this scene, painful as it was, had its grotesque features, which, in a less interested observer than Nicholas, might have provoked a smile. Mrs. Squeers stood at one of the desks, presiding over an immense basin of brimstone and treacle, of which delicious compound she administered a large instalment to each boy in succession, using for the purpose a common wooden spoon, which might have been originally manufactured for some gigantic top, and which widened every young gentleman's mouth considerably, they being all obliged, under heavy corporal penalties, to take in the whole of the bowl at a gasp.

"Now," said Squeers, giving the desk a great rap with his cane, which made half the little boys nearly jump out of their boots, "is that physicking over?"

"Just over," said Mrs. Squeers, choking the last boy in her hurry, and tapping the crown of his head with the wooden spoon to restore him. "Here, you Smike; take away now. Look sharp."

Smike shuffled out with the basin, and Mrs.

Squeers, having called up a little boy with a curly head, and wiped her hands upon it, hurried out after him into a species of wash-house, where there was a small fire and a large kettle, together with a number of little wooden bowls which were arranged upon a board.

Into these bowls Mrs. Squeers, assisted by the hungry servant, poured a brown composition, which looked like diluted pin-cushions without the covers, and was called porridge. A minute wedge of brown bread was inserted in each bowl, and when they had eat their porridge by means of the bread, the boys eat the bread itself, and had finished their breakfast; whereupon Mr. Squeers said, in a solemn voice, "For what we have received may the Lord make us truly thankful!" — and went away to his own.

After some half-hour's delay Mr. Squeers reappeared, and the boys took their places and their books, of which latter commodity the average might be about one to eight learners. A few minutes having elapsed, during which Mr. Squeers looked very profound, as if he had a perfect apprehension of what was inside all the books, and could say every word of their contents by heart, if he only chose to take the trouble, that gentleman called up the first class.

Obedient to this summons there ranged themselves in front of the schoolmaster's desk half a doz-

en scarecrows, out at knees and elbows, one of whom placed a torn and filthy book beneath his learned eye.

"This is the first class in English spelling and philosophy, Nickleby," said Squeers, beckoning Nicholas to stand beside him. "We 'll get up a Latin one, and hand that over to you. Now, then, where 's the first boy?"

"Please, sir, he 's cleaning the back parlor window," said the temporary head of the philosophical class.

"So he is, to be sure," rejoined Squeers. "We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. It 's just the same principle as the use of the globes. Where 's the second boy?'

"Please, sir, he 's weeding the garden," replied a small voice.

"To be sure," said Squeers, by no means disconcerted. "So he is. B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, tin, bottin, n-e-y, ney, bottinney, noun substantive, a knowledge of plants. When he has learned that bottinney means a knowledge of plants, he goes and knows 'em. That 's our system, Nickleby; what do you think of it?"

"It 's a very useful one, at any rate," answered Nicholas, significantly.

"I believe you," rejoined Squeers, not remarking the emphasis of his usher. "Third boy, what 's a horse?"

"A beast, sir," replied the boy.

"So it is," said Squeers. "Ain't it, Nickleby?"

"I believe there is no doubt of that, sir," answered Nicholas.

"Of course there is n't," said Squeers. "A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped 's Latin for beast, as everybody that 's gone through the grammar knows, or else where 's the use of having grammars at all?"

"Where, indeed?" said Nicholas, abstractedly.

"As you 're perfect in that," resumed Squeers, turning to the boy "go and look after *my* horse, and rub him down well, or I 'll rub you down. The rest of the class go and draw water up, till somebody tells you to leave off, for its washing-day to-morrow, and they want the coppers filled."

So saying, he dismissed the first class to their experiments in practical philosophy, and eyed Nicholas with a look half cunning and half doubtful, as if he were not altogether certain what he might think of him by this time.

"That 's the way we do it, Nickleby," he said, after a long pause.

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders in a manner that was scarcely perceptible, and said he saw it was.

"And a very good way it is, too," said Squeers. "Now just take those fourteen little boys, and hear them some reading, because, you know, you must begin to be useful, and idling about here won't do."

In this exciting occupation the morning lagged heavily on. At one o'clock, the boys, having previously had their appetites thoroughly taken away by stir-about and potatoes, sat down in the kitchen to some hard salt beef, of which Nicholas was graciously permitted to take his portion to his own solitary desk, and to eat there in peace. After this there was another hour of crouching in the school-room and shivering with cold, and then school began again.

Mr. Squeers then proceeded to open a miscellaneous collection of letters, some enclosing money, which Mrs. Squeers "took care of"; and others referring to some articles of apparel, as caps and so forth, all of which the same lady stated to be too large or too small, and calculated for nobody but young Squeers, who would appear indeed to have had most accommodating limbs, since everything that came into the school fitted him to a nicety. His head, in particular, must have been singularly elastic, for hats and caps of all dimensions were alike to him.

This business despatched, a few slovenly lessons were performed, and Squeers retired to his fireside, leaving Nicholas to take care of the boys in the school-room, which was very cold, and where a meal of bread and cheese was served out shortly after dark.

There was a small stove at that corner of the room which was nearest to the master's desk, and by it Nicholas sat down, so depressed and self-degraded by the consciousness of his position, that if death could have come upon him at that time, he would have been almost happy to meet it.

As he was absorbed in meditation, he all at once encountered the upturned face of Smike, who was on his knees before the stove, picking a few stray cinders from the hearth, and planting them on the fire. He had paused to steal a look at Nicholas, and when he saw that he was observed, shrunk back as if expecting a blow.

"You need not fear me," said Nicholas, kindly. "Are you cold?"

"N-n-o."

"You are shivering."

"I am not cold," replied Smike, quickly; "I am used to it."

There was such an obvious fear of giving offence in his manner, and he was such a timid, broken-spirited creature, that Nicholas could not help exclaiming, "Poor fellow!"

If he had struck the drudge, he would have slunk away without a word. But now he burst into tears.

"O dear, O dear!" he cried, covering his face with his cracked and horny hands. "My heart will break. It will, it will."

"Hush!" said Nicholas, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "Be a man; you are nearly one by years, God help you."

"By years!" cried Smike. "O dear, dear, how many of them! How many of them since I was a little child, younger than any that are here now! Where are they all?"

"Whom do you speak of?" inquired Nicholas, wishing to rouse the poor half-witted creature to reason. "Tell me."

"My friends," he replied, "myself — my — oh! what sufferings mine have been!"

"There is always hope," said Nicholas: he knew not what to say.

"No," rejoined the other, — "no; none for me. Do you remember the boy that died here?"

"I was not here, you know," said Nicholas, gently; "but what of him?"

"Why," replied the youth, drawing closer to his questioner's side, "I was with him at night, and when it was all silent he cried no more for friends he wished to come and sit with him, but began to

see faces round his bed that came from home; he said they smiled, and talked to him, and died at last lifting his head to kiss them. Do you hear?"

"Yes, yes," rejoined Nicholas.

"What faces will smile on me when I die?" said his companion, shivering. "Who will talk to me in those long nights? They cannot come from home; they would frighten me if they did, for I don't know what it is, and should n't know them. Pain and fear, pain and fear for me, alive or dead. No hope, no hope."

The bell rang to bed, and the boy, subsiding at the sound into his usual listless state, crept away as if anxious to avoid notice. It was with a heavy heart that Nicholas soon afterwards — no, not retired; there was no retirement there — followed — to his dirty and crowded dormitory.

II.

SMIKE'S FLIGHT.

THE cold feeble dawn of a January morning was stealing in at the windows of the common sleeping-room, when Nicholas, raising himself upon his arm, looked among the prostrate forms which on every side surrounded him, as though in search of some particular object.

He was still occupied in this search, and had half risen from his bed in the eagerness of his quest, when the voice of Squeers was heard calling from the bottom of the stairs.

"Now then," cried that gentleman, "are you going to sleep all day, up there —"

"You lazy hounds?" added Mrs. Squeers, finishing the sentence, and producing at the same time a sharp sound like that which is occasioned by the lacing of stays.

"We shall be down directly, sir," replied Nicholas.

"Down directly!" said Squeers. "Ah! you had better be down directly, or I'll be down upon some of you in less. Where 's that Smike?"

Nicholas looked hurriedly around again, but made no answer.

"Smike!" shouted Squeers.

"Do you want your head broke in a fresh place, Smike?" demanded his amiable lady in the same key.

Still there was no reply, and still Nicholas stared about him, as did the greater part of the boys who were by this time roused.

"Confound his impudence," muttered Squeers, rapping the stair-rail impatiently with his cane. "Nickleby!"

"Well, sir."

"Send that obstinate scoundrel down; don't you hear me calling?"

"He is not here, sir," replied Nicholas.

"Don't tell me a lie," retorted the schoolmaster. "He is."

"He is not," retorted Nicholas, angrily; "don't tell me one."

"We shall soon see that," said Mr. Squeers, rushing up stairs. "I'll find him, I'll warrant you."

With which assurance Mr. Squeers bounced into the dormitory, and, swinging his cane in the air ready for a blow, darted into the corner where the lean body of the drudge was usually stretched at night. The cane descended harmlessly upon the ground. There was nobody there.

"What does this mean?" said Squeers, turning round with a very pale face. "Where have you hid him?"

"I have seen nothing of him since last night," replied Nicholas.

"Come," said Squeers, evidently frightened, though he endeavored to look otherwise, "you won't save him this way. Where is he?"

"At the bottom of the nearest pond for aught I know," rejoined Nicholas, in a low voice, and fixing his eyes full on the master's face.

"What do you mean by that?" retorted Squeers, in great perturbation. And without waiting for a reply, he inquired of the boys whether any one among them knew anything of their missing schoolmate.

There was a general hum of anxious denial.

"Well, Nickleby," said Squeers, eying him maliciously. "You think he has run away, I suppose?"

"I think it extremely likely," replied Nicholas, in a very quiet manner.

"O, you do, do you?" sneered Squeers. "Maybe you know he has?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"He didn't tell you he was going, I suppose, did he?" sneered Squeers.

"He did not," replied Nicholas; "I am very

glad he did not, for it would then have been my duty to have warned you in time."

"Which no doubt you would have been very sorry to do," said Squeers, in a taunting fashion.

"I should, indeed," replied Nicholas. "You interpret my feelings with great accuracy."

Mrs. Squeers had listened to this conversation from the bottom of the stairs; but now losing all patience, she hastily assumed her night-jacket, and made her way to the scene of action.

"What's all this here to-do?" said the lady, as the boys fell off right and left to save her the trouble of clearing a passage with her brawny arms. "What on earth are you talking to him for, Squeery?"

"Why, my dear," said Squeers, "the fact is, that Smike is not to be found."

"Well, I know that," said the lady, "and where's the wonder? Now, if you take the chaise and go one road, and I borrow Swallow's chaise, and go the other, what with keeping our eyes open and asking questions, one or other of us is pretty certain to lay hold of him."

The worthy lady's plan was adopted and put into execution without a moment's delay. After a very hasty breakfast, and the prosecution of some inquiries in the village, the result of which seemed to show that he was on the right track, Squeers started off

in the pony-chaise, intent upon discovery and vengeance. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Squeers, arrayed in a white top-coat, and tied up in various shawls and handkerchiefs, issued forth in another chaise and another direction, taking with her a good-sized bludgeon, several odd pieces of strong cord, and a stout laboring man; all provided and carried upon the expedition with the sole object of assisting in the capture, and (once caught) insuring the safe custody of the unfortunate Smike.

Nicholas remained behind in a tumult of feeling, sensible that, whatever might be the upshot of the boy's flight, nothing but painful and deplorable consequences were likely to ensue from it.

He lingered on in restless anxiety, until the evening of next day, when Squeers returned alone and unsuccessful.

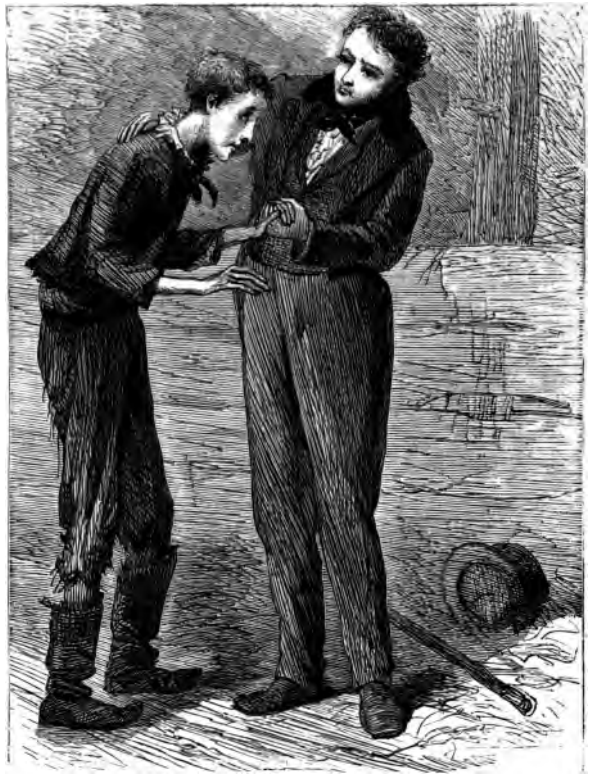
Another day came, and Nicholas was scarcely awake, when he heard the wheels of a chaise approaching the house. It stopped. The voice of Mrs. Squeers was heard, and in exultation, ordering a glass of spirits for somebody, which was in itself a sufficient sign that something extraordinary had happened. Nicholas hardly dared to look out of the window, but he did so, and the very first object that met his eyes was the wretched Smike, — so bedabbled with mud and rain, so haggard and worn and wild, that, but for his garments being such as no scare-

crow was ever seen to wear, he might have been doubtful, even then, of his identity.

"Lift him out," said Squeers, after he had literally feasted his eyes in silence upon the culprit. "Bring him in, — bring him in."

"Take care," cried Mrs. Squeers, as her husband proffered his assistance. "We tied his legs under the apron, and made 'em fast to the chaise, to prevent his giving us the slip again."

With hands trembling with delight, Squeers unloosened the cord, and Smike, to all appearance more dead than alive, was brought into the house, and securely locked up in a cellar, until such time as Mr. Squeers should deem it expedient to operate upon him in presence of the assembled school.



NICHOLAS AND SMIKE.

III.

SMIKE'S RESCUE.

THE news that Smike had been caught and brought back in triumph ran like wildfire through the hungry community; and expectation was on tiptoe all the morning. On tiptoe it was destined to remain, however, until afternoon; when Squeers, having refreshed himself with his dinner, and further strengthened himself by an extra libation or so, made his appearance (accompanied by his amiable partner) with a countenance of portentous import, and a fearful instrument of flagellation, strong, supple, wax-ended, and new, — in short, purchased that morning expressly for the occasion.

"Is every boy here?" asked Squeers, in a tremendous voice.

Every boy was there, but every boy was afraid to speak; so Squeers glared along the lines to assure himself, and every eye drooped, and every head cowered down, as he did so.

"Each boy keep his place," said Squeers, administering his favorite blow to the desk, and regarding

with gloomy satisfaction the universal start which it never failed to occasion. "Nickleby, to your desk, sir."

It was remarked by more than one small observer, that there was a very curious and unusual expression in the usher's face, but he took his seat without opening his lips in reply; and Squeers, casting a triumphant glance at his assistant, and a look of most comprehensive despotism on the boys, left the room, and shortly afterwards returned, dragging Smike by the collar, — or rather by that fragment of his jacket which was nearest the place where his collar would have been, had he boasted such a decoration.

In any other place the appearance of the wretched, jaded, spiritless object would have occasioned a murmur of compassion and remonstrance. It had some effect even there; for the lookers-on moved uneasily in their seats, and a few of the boldest ventured to steal looks at each other, expressive of indignation and pity.

They were lost on Squeers, however, whose gaze was fastened on the luckless Smike, as he inquired, according to custom in such cases, whether he had anything to say for himself.

"Nothing, I suppose?" said Squeers, with a diabolical grin.

Smike glanced round, and his eye rested for an

instant on Nicholas, as if he had expected him to intercede; but his look was riveted on his desk.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded Squeers again, giving his right arm two or three flourishes to try its power and suppleness. "Stand a little out of the way, Mrs. Squeers, my dear; I 've hardly got room enough."

"Spare me, sir," cried Smike.

"O, that 's all, is it?" said Squeers. "Yes, I 'll flog you within an inch of your life, and spare you that."

Squeers caught the boy firmly in his grip; one desperate cut had fallen on his body,—he was wincing from the lash, and uttering a scream of pain,—it was raised again, and again about to fall,—when Nicholas Nickleby, suddenly starting up, cried, "Stop!" in a voice that made the rafters ring.

"Who cried stop?" said Squeers, turning savagely round.

"I," said Nicholas, stepping forward. "This must not go on."

"Must not go on!" cried Squeers, almost in a shriek.

"No!" thundered Nicholas.

Aghast and stupefied by the boldness of the interference, Squeers released his hold of Smike, and falling back a pace or two, gazed upon Nicholas with looks that were positively frightful.

"I say must not," repeated Nicholas, nothing daunted; "shall not. I will prevent it."

Squeers continued to gaze upon him, with his eyes starting out of his head; but astonishment had actually for the moment bereft him of speech.

"You have disregarded all my quiet interference in the miserable lad's behalf," said Nicholas; "returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him, and offered to be responsible that he would remain quietly here. Don't blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself; not I."

"Sit down, beggar!" screamed Squeers, almost beside himself with rage, and seizing Smike as he spoke.

"Wretch!" rejoined Nicholas, fiercely, "touch him at your peril! I will not stand by and see it done. My blood is up, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you, if you drive me on!"

He had hardly spoken when Squeers, in a violent outbreak of wrath, and with a cry like the howl of a wild beast, spat upon him, and struck him a blow across the face with his instrument of torture, which raised up a bar of livid flesh as it was inflicted. Smarting with the agony of the blow, and concentrating into that one moment all his feelings of rage, scorn, and indignation, Nicholas sprang upon him, wrested

the weapon from his hand, and, pinning him by the throat, beat the ruffian till he roared for mercy.

The boys — with the exception of Master Squeers, who, coming to his father's assistance, harassed the enemy in the rear — moved not hand or foot; but Mrs. Squeers, with many shrieks for aid, hung on to the tail of her partner's coat, and endeavored to drag him from his infuriated adversary.

Nicholas threw all his remaining strength into half a dozen finishing cuts, and flung Squeers from him with all the force he could muster. The violence of his fall precipitated Mrs. Squeers completely over an adjacent form, and Squeers, striking his head against it in his descent, lay at his full length on the ground, stunned and motionless.

Having brought affairs to this happy termination, and ascertained to his thorough satisfaction that Squeers was only stunned, and not dead (upon which point he had had some unpleasant doubts at first), Nicholas left his family to restore him, and retired to consider what course he had better adopt. He looked anxiously round for Smike as he left the room, but he was nowhere to be seen.

After a brief consideration he packed up a few clothes in a small leathern valise, and, finding that nobody offered to oppose his progress, marched boldly out by the front door, and shortly afterwards struck into the road which led to Greta Bridge.

He lay that night at a cottage where beds were let at a cheap rate to the more humble class of travellers, and, rising betimes next morning, made his way before night to Boroughbridge. Passing through that town in search of some cheap resting-place, he stumbled upon an empty barn within a couple of hundred yards of the roadside, in a warm corner of which he stretched his weary limbs, and soon fell asleep.

When he awoke next morning, and tried to recollect his dreams, which had been all connected with his recent sojourn at Dotheboys Hall, he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and stared — not with the most composed countenance possible — at some motionless object which seemed to be stationed within a few yards in front of him.

"Strange!" cried Nicholas; "can this be some lingering creation of the visions that have scarcely left me! It cannot be real, — and yet I — I am awake. Smike?"

The form moved, rose, advanced, and dropped upon its knees at his feet. It was Smike indeed.

"Why do you kneel to me?" said Nicholas, hastily raising him.

"To go with you, — anywhere, — everywhere, — to the world's end, — to the churchyard grave," replied Smike, clinging to his hand. "Let me, oh, do let me! You are my home, — my kind friend, — take me with you, pray."

"I am a friend who can do little for you," said Nicholas, kindly. "How came you here?"

He had followed him, it seemed; had never lost sight of him all the way; had watched while he slept, and when he halted for refreshment; and had feared to appear before, lest he should be sent back. He had not intended to appear now, but Nicholas had awakened more suddenly than he looked for, and he had no time to conceal himself.

"Poor fellow!" said Nicholas, "your hard fate denies you any friend but one, and he is nearly as poor and helpless as yourself."

"May I — may I go with you?" asked Smike, timidly. "I will be your faithful, hard-working servant, I will indeed. I want no clothes," added the poor creature, drawing his rags together; "these will do very well. I only want to be near you."

"And you shall," cried Nicholas. "And the world shall deal by you as it does by me, till one or both of us shall quit it for a better. Come."

With these words he strapped his burden on his shoulders, and, taking his stick in one hand, extended the other to his delighted charge, and so they passed out of the old barn together.

OLIVER TWIST.

OLIVER TWIST.

I.

THE WORKHOUSE.

OLIVER TWIST was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers. He was despatched to a workhouse where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits for the consideration of seven-pence halfpenny per week. It could not be expected that this system of farming should produce any very extraordinary or luxuriant crop. Oliver Twist's ninth birthday found him a pale, thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature and decidedly small in circumference. But nature or inheritance had implanted a good sturdy spirit in Oliver's breast. It had plenty of room to expand, thanks to the spare diet of the establishment; and perhaps to this circumstance may be attributed his having any ninth birthday at all.

The room in which the boys were fed was a large stone hall, with a copper at one end, out of which the

master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at meal-times. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer, and no more, except on occasions of great public rejoicing, and then he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper with such eager eyes, as if they could devour the very bricks of which it was composed, — employing themselves meanwhile in sucking their fingers most assiduously, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon. Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and had n't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook's shop), hinted darkly to his companions that unless he had another basin of gruel *per diem*, he was afraid he should some night eat the boy who slept next to him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye, and they implicitly believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after

supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper, his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him, the gruel was served out, and a long grace was said over the short commons. The gruel disappeared, and the boys whispered to each other and winked at Oliver, while his next neighbors nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger and reckless with misery. He rose from the table, and advancing, basin and spoon in hand, to the master, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity, —

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man, but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder, and the boys with fear.

"What!" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave when

Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and, addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said: —

"Mr. Limbkins, sir, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

"For more!" said Mr. Limbkins; "compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allowed by the dietary?"

"He did, sir," replied Bumble.

"That boy will be hung," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "I know that boy will be hung."

Nobody controverted the prophetic gentleman's opinion. An animated discussion took place. Oliver was ordered into instant confinement; and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish: in other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

II.

OLIVER'S FLIGHT.

[The child was so cruelly treated at his place of employment, that he resolved upon flight.]

HAVING gazed cautiously round him, and listened intently, he gently undid the fastenings of the door and looked abroad.

It was a cold, dark night. The stars seemed to the boy's eyes farther from the earth than he had ever seen them before; there was no wind, and the sombre shadows thrown by the trees on the earth looked sepulchral and death-like, from being so still. He softly reclosed the door. Having availed himself of the expiring light of the candle to tie up in a handkerchief the few articles of wearing apparel he had, he sat himself down upon a bench to wait for morning.

With the first ray of light that struggled through the crevices in the shutters, Oliver rose, and again unbarred the door. One timid look around, — one moment's pause of hesitation, — he had closed it behind him, and was in the open street.

He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain whither to fly. He remembered to have seen the wagons, as they went out, toiling up the hill; he took the same route, and arriving at a footpath across the fields, which he thought after some distance led out again into the road, struck into it, and walked quickly on.

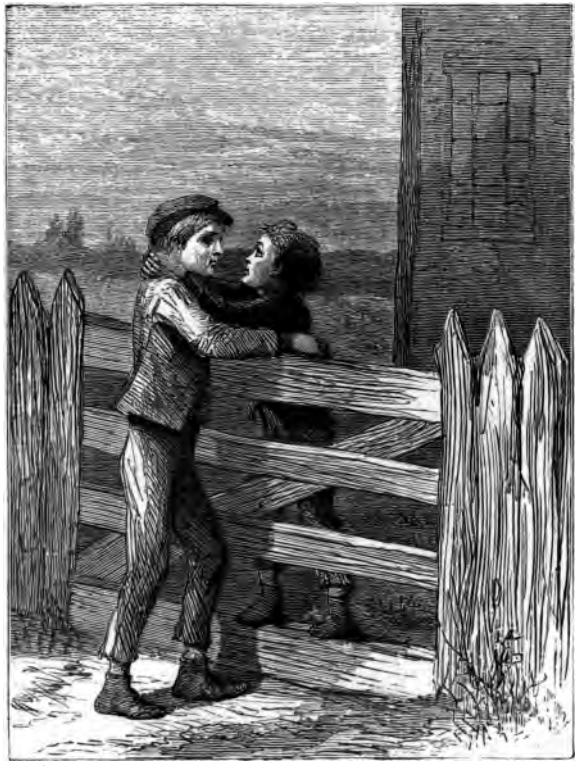
He reached the workhouse. There was no appearance of its inmates stirring at that early hour. Oliver stopped, and peeped into the garden. A child was weeding one of the little beds; and, as he stopped, he raised his pale face, and disclosed the features of one of his former companions. Oliver felt glad to see him before he went, for, though younger than himself, he had been his little friend and playmate. They had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together, many and many a time.

"Hush, Dick!" said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. "Is any one up?"

"Nobody but me," replied the child.

"You must n't say you saw me, Dick," said Oliver; "I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long way off, I don't know where. How pale you are!"

"I heard the doctor tell them I was dying," replied the child, with a faint smile. "I am very glad to see you, dear; but don't stop, don't stop."



OLIVER AND LITTLE DICK.

"Yes, yes, I will, to say good by to you," replied Oliver. "I shall see you again, Dick; I know I shall. You will be well and happy."

"I hope so," replied the child, "after I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of heaven, and angels, and kind faces, that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me," said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms round Oliver's neck. "Good by, dear! God bless you!"

The blessing was from a young child's lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through the struggles and sufferings of his after life, he never once forgot it.

Oliver reached the stile at which the by-path terminated, and once more gained the high-road. It was eight o'clock now. Though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges by turns, till noon, fearing that he might be pursued and overtaken. Then he sat down to rest at the side of a mile-stone, and began to think for the first time where he had better go and try to live.

The stone by which he was seated bore in large characters an intimation that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy's mind.

London! — that great large place! — nobody — not even Mr. Bumble — could ever find him there.

Oliver walked twenty miles that day; and all that time tasted nothing but the crust of dry bread, and a few draughts of water which he begged at the cottage doors by the roadside. When the night came, he turned into a meadow, and, creeping close under a hay-rick, determined to lie there till morning. He felt frightened at first, for the wind moaned dismally over the empty fields, and he was cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before. Being very tired with his walk, however, he soon fell asleep and forgot his troubles.

He felt cold and stiff when he got up next morning and so hungry that he was obliged to exchange his only penny for a small loaf in the very first village through which he passed. He had walked no more than twelve miles when night closed in again; for his feet were sore, and his legs so weak that they trembled beneath him.

III.

HIS NEW FRIENDS.

EARLY on the seventh morning after he had left his native place, Oliver limped slowly into the little town of Barnet. The window-shutters were closed, the street was empty, not a soul had awakened to the business of the day. The sun was rising in all his splendid beauty, but the light only seemed to show the boy his own lonesomeness and desolation as he sat, with bleeding feet and covered with dust, upon a cold doorstep.

He had been crouching on the step for some time, when he was roused by observing that a boy, who had passed him carelessly some minutes before, had returned, and was now surveying him most earnestly from the opposite side of the way. He took little heed of this at first; but the boy remained in the same attitude of close observation so long, that Oliver raised his head, and returned his steady look. Upon this the boy crossed over, and, walking close up to Oliver, said: —

"Hullo! my covey, what 's the row?"

The boy who addressed this inquiry to the young wayfarer was about his own age, but one of the

queerest-looking boys that Oliver had ever seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough, and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had got about him all the airs and manners of a man.

"Hullo, my covey, what 's the row?" said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.

"I am very hungry and tired," replied Oliver, the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. "I have walked a long way, — I have been walking these seven days."

"Walking for sivin days!" said the young gentleman. "O, I see. Beak's orders, eh? But," he added, noticing Oliver's look of surprise, "I suppose you don't know wot a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on."

Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird's mouth described by the term in question.

"My eyes, how green!" exclaimed the young gentleman. "Why, a beak 's a madg'strate; and when you walk by a beak 's order, it is not straight forerd, but always going up, and niver coming down agin."

Assisting Oliver to rise, the young gentleman took him to an adjacent chandler's shop, where he purchased a sufficiency of ready-dressed ham and a half-quartern loaf. Taking the bread under his arm, the young gentleman turned into a small public-

house, and led the way to a tap-room in the rear of the premises. Here a pot of beer was brought in by the direction of the mysterious youth; and Oliver, falling to at his new friend's bidding, made a long and hearty meal, during the progress of which the strange boy eyed him from time to time with great attention.

"Going to London?" said the strange boy, when Oliver had at length concluded.

"Yes."

"Got any lodgings?"

"No."

"Money?"

"No."

The strange boy whistled, and put his arms into his pockets as far as the big coat-sleeves would let them go.

"Do you live in London?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes, I do, when I'm at home," replied the boy. "I suppose you want some place to sleep to-night, don't you?"

"I do indeed," answered Oliver. "I have not slept under a roof since I left the country."

"Don't fret your eyelids on that score," said the young gentleman. "I 've got to be in London to-night, and I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there, wot 'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change; that is, if any genelman

he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? — O no — not in the least — by no means — certainly not."

The young gentleman smiled, as if to intimate that the latter fragments of discourse were playfully ironical, and finished the beer as he did so.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted, especially as it was immediately followed up by the assurance that the old gentleman already referred to would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue, from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins, but among his intimate friends better known by the *sobriquet* of "The Artful Dodger," and that he was a peculiar pet and *protégé* of the elderly gentleman before mentioned.

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington.

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odors.

Oliver was just considering whether he had n't

better run away, when his conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house near Field Lane, and, drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them.

"Now, then," cried a voice from below, in reply to a whistle from the Dodger.

The light of a feeble candle gleamed upon the wall at the farther end of the passage, and a man's face peeped out from where a balustrade of the old kitchen staircase had been broken away.

"There 's two on you," said the man, thrusting the candle farther out, and shading his eyes with his hand. "Who 's the tother one?"

"A new pal," replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

"Where did he come from?"

"Greenland. Is Fagin up stairs?"

"Yes, he 's a sortin' the wipes. Up with you!" The candle was drawn back, and the face disappeared.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and with the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back room, and drew Oliver in after him.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly

black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire, upon which was a candle, stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantel-piece by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare, and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and a clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks were huddled side by side on the floor; and seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits with all the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the Jew, and then turned round and grinned at Oliver, as did the Jew himself, toasting-fork in hand.

"This is him, Fagin," said Jack Dawkins; "my friend Oliver Twist."

The Jew grinned; and, making a low obeisance to Oliver, took him by the hand, and hoped he should have the honor of his intimate acquaintance. Upon this, the young gentlemen with the pipes came round him, and shook both his hands very hard,—especially the one in which he held his little bundle.

One young gentleman was very anxious to hang up his cap for him; and another was so obliging as to put his hands in his pockets, in order that, as he was very tired, he might not have the trouble of emptying them when he went to bed. These civilities would probably have been extended much further, but for a liberal exercise of the Jew's toasting-fork on the heads and shoulders of the affectionate youths who offered them.

"We are very glad to see you, Oliver, — very," said the Jew. "Dodger, take off the sausages, and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah! you 're a staring at the pocket-handkerchiefs! eh, my dear? There are a good many of 'em, ain't there? We 've just looked 'em out ready for the wash; that 's all, Oliver; that 's all. Ha! ha! ha!"

The latter part of this speech was hailed by a boisterous shout from all the hopeful pupils of the merry old gentleman, in the midst of which they went to supper.

Oliver ate his share; and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin and water, telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Almost instantly afterwards he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks, and then he sunk into a deep sleep.

IV.

OLIVER'S ADVENTURE.

FOR many days Oliver remained in the Jew's room, picking the marks out of the pocket-handkerchiefs, of which a great many were brought home.

At length he began to languish for the fresh air, and took many occasions of earnestly entreating the old gentleman to allow him to go out to work with his two companions.

At length, one morning Oliver obtained the permission he had so eagerly sought, and was placed under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates and his friend the Dodger. They were just emerging from a narrow court, when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again with the greatest caution and circumspection.

"What 's the matter?" demanded Oliver.

"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove there at the bookstall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He 'll do," said the Dodger.

"A prime plant," observed Charley Bates.

Oliver looked from one to the other with the greatest surprise, but was not permitted to make any inquiries, for the two boys walked stealthily across the road, and slunk close behind the old gentleman towards whom his attention had been directed. Oliver walked a few paces after them, and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles; dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar, and white trousers; with a smart bamboo cane under his arm. He had taken up a book from the stall, and there he stood, reading away as hard as if he were in his elbow-chair in his own study.

What was Oliver's horror and alarm, as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into this old gentleman's pocket, and draw from thence a handkerchief, which he handed to Charley Bates, and with which they both ran away round the corner at full speed!

In one instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs and the Jew rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood for a moment with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror, that he felt as if

he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels, and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space, and the very instant that Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp round. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the depredator, and shouting, "Stop thief!" with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

Stopped at last. A clever blow that. He is down upon the pavement, and the crowd eagerly gather round him; each new-comer jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse. "Stand aside!" — "Give him a little air!" — "Nonsense! he don't deserve it." — "Where 's the gentleman?" — "Here he is, coming down the street." — "Make room there for the gentleman!" — "Is this the boy, sir?" — "Yes."

Oliver lay covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers, and made this reply to their anxious inquiries.

"Yes," said the gentleman, in a benevolent voice, "*I am afraid* it is."

"Afraid!" murmured the crowd. "That's a good 'un."

"Poor fellow!" said the gentleman, "he has hurt himself."

"I did that, sir," said a great lubberly fellow stepping forward; "and preciously I cut my knuckle agin his mouth. *I* stopped him, sir."

The fellow touched his hat with a grin, expecting something for his pains; but the old gentleman, eying him with an expression of disgust, looked anxiously round, as if he contemplated running away himself; which it is very possible he might have attempted to do, and thus afforded another chase, had not a police officer (who is always the last person to arrive in such cases) at that moment made his way through the crowd, and seized Oliver by the collar. "Come, get up," said the man, roughly.

"It was n't me, indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys," clasping his hands passionately, and looking round.

"Don't hurt him," said the old gentleman, compassionately.

"O no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer, tearing his jacket half off his back in proof thereof. "Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?"

"Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift

to raise himself upon his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket-collar at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side; and as many of the crowd as could got a little ahead, and stared back at Oliver from time to time. The boys shouted in triumph, and on they went.

V.

OLIVER'S ILLNESS.

[Oliver was brought before the court, and acquitted of the theft. But he fainted in the court-room, with fatigue and excitement, and was taken home by the old gentleman who had been robbed.]

THE coach stopped at length before a neat house in a quiet shady street near Pentonville. Here a bed was procured without loss of time, in which Mr. Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here he was attended with a kindness and solicitude which knew no bounds.

But for many days Oliver remained insensible to all the goodness of his new friends; the sun rose and sunk, and rose and sunk again, and many times after that, and still the boy lay stretched upon his uneasy bed, dwindling away beneath the dry and wasting heat of fever.

Weak and thin and pallid, he awoke at last from what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream. Feebly raising himself in the bed, with his head resting on his trembling arm, he looked anxiously round.

"What room is this?—where have I been

brought to?" said Oliver. "This is not the place I went to sleep in."

He uttered these words in a feeble voice, being very faint and weak; but they were overheard at once, for the curtain at the bed's head was hastily drawn back, and a motherly old lady, very neatly and precisely dressed, rose, as she undrew it, from an arm-chair close by, in which she had been sitting at needle-work.

"Hush, my dear," said the old lady, softly. "You must be very quiet, or you will be ill again, and you have been very bad, — as bad as bad could be, pretty nigh. Lie down again, there 's a dear." With these words, the old lady very gently placed Oliver's head upon the pillow, and, smoothing back his hair from his forehead, looked so kindly and lovingly in his face, that he could not help placing his little withered hand upon hers, and drawing it round his neck.

"Save us!" said the old lady, with tears in her eyes, "what a grateful little dear it is! Pretty creetur; what would his mother feel if she had sat by him as I have, and could see him now!"

"Perhaps she does see me," whispered Oliver, folding his hands together; "perhaps she has sat by me, ma'am. I almost feel as if she had."

"That was the fever, my dear," said the old lady, mildly.

"I suppose it was," replied Oliver, thoughtfully, "because heaven is a long way off, and they are too happy there to come down to the bedside of a poor boy. But if she knew I was ill, she must have pitied me even there, for she was very ill herself before she died. She can't know anything about me, though," added Oliver, after a moment's silence, "for if she had seen me beat, it would have made her sorrowful; and her face has always looked sweet and happy when I have dreamed of her."

The old lady made no reply to this, but wiping her eyes first, and her spectacles, which lay on the counterpane, afterwards, as if they were part and parcel of those features, brought some cool stuff for Oliver to drink, and then, patting him on the cheek, told him he must lie very quiet, or he would be ill again.

So Oliver kept very still, partly because he was anxious to obey the kind old lady in all things, and partly, to tell the truth, because he was completely exhausted with what he had already said.

Gradually he fell into that deep, tranquil sleep which ease from recent suffering alone imparts,—that calm and peaceful rest which it is pain to wake from.

It had been bright day for hours when Oliver opened his eyes; and when he did so, he felt cheerful and happy. The crisis of the disease was safely past; he belonged to the world again.

VI.

OLIVER'S DANGER.

[Old Fagin, the thief, being alarmed lest Oliver should give evidence against him, laid a plan by which the child was brought back into his power. Hoping to make a thief of him, Fagin then sent Oliver by night with two housebreakers, who meant to make use of him in their attempt. It was not until they reached the house that he understood their purpose.]

AND now, for the first time, Oliver, wellnigh mad with grief and terror, saw that housebreaking and robbery, if not murder, were the objects of the expedition. He clasped his hands together, and involuntarily uttered a subdued exclamation of horror.

"O, for God's sake, let me go!" cried Oliver; "let me run away, and die in the fields. I will never come near London, — never, never! O, pray have mercy upon me, and do not make me steal! for the love of all the bright angels that rest in heaven, have mercy upon me!"

The man to whom this appeal was made swore a dreadful oath, and had cocked a pistol, when Toby, striking it from his grasp, placed his hand upon the boy's mouth, and dragged him to the house.

"Hush!" cried the man; "it won't answer here. Say another word, and I'll do your business myself, with a crack on the head that makes no noise, and is quite as certain and more genteel. Here, Bill, wrench the shutter open. He's game enough now, I'll engage. I've seen older hands of his age took the same way for a minute or two on a cold night."

Sikes plied the crow-bar vigorously, but with little noise. After some delay, and some assistance from Toby, the shutter to which he had referred swung open on its hinges.

It was a little lattice window, about five feet and a half above the ground, at the back of the house, belonging to a scullery or small brewing place at the end of the passage; the aperture was so small that the inmates had probably not thought it worth while to defend it more securely; but it was large enough to admit a boy of Oliver's size, nevertheless. A very brief exercise of Mr. Sikes's art sufficed to overcome the fastening of the lattice, and it soon stood wide open also.

"Now listen, you young limb!" whispered Sikes, drawing a dark lantern from his pocket, and throwing the glare full on Oliver's face; "I'm going to put you through there. Take this light, go softly up the steps straight afore you, and along the little hall to the street door, unfasten it, and let us in."

Toby then produced his lantern, and placed it on

the ground; and then planted himself firmly with his head against the wall beneath the window, and his hands upon his knees, so as to make a step of his back. This was no sooner done than Sikes, mounting upon him, put Oliver gently through the window, with his feet first; and, without leaving hold of his collar, planted him safely on the floor inside.

"Take this lantern," said Sikes, looking into the room. "You see the stairs afore you!"

Oliver, more dead than alive, gasped out, "Yes"; and Sikes, pointing to the street door with the pistol barrel, briefly advised him to take notice that he was within shot all the way, and that if he faltered, he would fall dead that instant.

"It 's done in a minute," said Sikes, in the same low whisper. "Directly I leave go of you, do your work. Hark!"

"What 's that?" whispered the other man.

They listened intently.

"Nothing," said Sikes, releasing his hold of Oliver. "Now!"

In the short time he had had to collect his senses, the boy had firmly resolved that, whether he died in the attempt or not, he would make one effort to dart up stairs from the hall and alarm the family. Filled with this idea, he advanced at once, but stealthily.

"Come back!" suddenly cried Sikes, aloud. "Back! back!"

Scared by the sudden breaking of the dead stillness of the place, and a loud cry which followed it, Oliver let his lantern fall, and knew not whether to advance or fly. The cry was repeated — a light appeared — a vision of two terrified half-dressed men at the top of the stairs swam before his eyes, — a flash — a loud noise — a smoke — a crash somewhere, but where he knew not — and he staggered back.

Sikes had disappeared for an instant; but he was up and had him by the collar before the smoke had cleared away. Then came the loud ringing of a bell mingled with the noise of fire-arms and the shouts of men, and the sensation of being carried over uneven ground at a great pace.

A cold, deadly feeling crept over the boy's heart, and he saw and heard no more.

He was found the next morning by Giles, one of the servants, who called in a great state of excitement up the staircase, "Here 's one of the thieves, ma'am! Here 's a thief, miss — wounded, miss! I shot him, miss, and Brittles held the light."

"In a lantern, miss," cried Brittles, applying one hand to the side of his mouth, so that his voice might travel the better.

The two women-servants ran up stairs to carry

the intelligence that Mr. Giles had captured a robber; and Mr. Brittles busied himself in endeavoring to restore Oliver, lest he should die before he could be hung. In the midst of all this noise and commotion there was heard a sweet female voice which quelled it in an instant.

"Giles!" whispered the voice from the stair-head.

"I'm here, miss," replied Mr. Giles. "Don't be frightened, miss; I ain't much injured. He did n't make a very desperate resistance, miss; I was soon too many for him."

"Hush!" replied the young lady; "you frighten my aunt almost as much as the thieves did. Is the poor creature severely hurt?"

"Wounded desperate, miss," replied Giles, with indescribable complacency.

"He looks as if he was a going, miss," bawled Brittles, in the same manner as before. "Would n't you like to come and look at him, miss, in case he should—"

"Hush, pray, there's a good man!" rejoined the young lady. "Wait quietly one instant while I speak to aunt."

With a footstep as soft and gentle as the voice, the speaker tripped away, and soon returned with the direction that the wounded person was to be carried carefully up stairs to Mr. Giles's room, and that Brittles was to saddle the pony and betake

himself instantly to Chertsey, from which place he was to despatch with all speed the officers and doctor.

"But won't you take one look at him first, miss?" said Giles, with as much pride as if Oliver were some bird of rare plumage that he had skilfully brought down. "Not one little peep, miss?"

"Not now for the world," replied the young lady. "Poor fellow! O, treat him kindly, Giles, if it is only for my sake!"

The old servant looked up at the speaker, as she turned away, with a glance as proud and admiring as if she had been his own child. Then bending over Oliver, he helped to carry him up stairs with the care and solicitude of a woman.

A gig drove up to the garden gate, out of which there jumped a fat gentleman, who ran straight up to the door, and, getting quickly into the house by some mysterious process, burst into the room, and nearly overturned Mr. Giles and the breakfast-table together.

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed the fat gentleman. "My dear Mrs. Maylie — bless my soul — in the silence of night too — I *never* heard of such a thing! And you, Miss Rose," said the doctor, turning to the young lady, "I —"

"O, indeed," said Rose, interrupting him; "but

there is a poor creature up stairs whom aunt wishes you to see."

"Where is he? Show me the way. I'll look in again as I come down, Mrs. Maylie. That's the little window that he got in at, eh? Well, I could n't have believed it." Talking all the way, he followed Mr. Giles up stairs.

The doctor was absent much longer than either he or the ladies had anticipated. A large flat box was fetched out of the gig, and a bedroom bell was rung very often, and the servants ran up and down stairs perpetually, from which tokens it was justly concluded that something important was going on above. At length he returned; and, in reply to an anxious inquiry after his patient, looked very mysterious, and closed the door carefully.

"This is a very extraordinary thing, Mrs. Maylie," said the doctor, standing with his back to the door as if to keep it shut.

"He is not in danger, I hope?" said the old lady.

"Why, that would not be an extraordinary thing, under the circumstances," replied the doctor, "though I don't think he is. Have you seen this thief?"

"No," rejoined the old lady.

"Nor heard anything about him?"

"No."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," interposed Mr. Giles; "but I was going to tell you about him when Doctor Losberne came in."

The fact was, that Mr. Giles had not at first been able to bring his mind to the avowal that he had only shot a boy. Such commendations had been bestowed upon his bravery, that he could not for the life of him help postponing the explanation for a few delicious minutes, during which he had flourished in the very zenith of a brief reputation for undaunted courage.

"Rose wished to see the man," said Mrs. Maylie, "but I would n't hear of it."

"Humph!" rejoined the doctor. "There 's nothing very alarming in his appearance. Have you any objection to see him in my presence?"

"If it be necessary," replied the old lady, "certainly not."

"Then I think it is necessary," said the doctor; "at all events I am quite sure that you would deeply regret not having done so, if you postponed it. He is perfectly quiet and comfortable now. Allow me — Miss Rose, will you permit me? Not the slightest fear, I pledge you my honor."

The doctor drew the young lady's arm through one of his, and, offering his disengaged hand to Mrs. Maylie, led them with much ceremony and stateliness up stairs.

VII.

HIS FINAL ESCAPE.

"NOW," said the doctor, in a whisper, as he softly turned the handle of a bedroom door, "let us hear what you think of him. He has not been shaved very recently, but he doesn't look at all ferocious notwithstanding. Stop, though. Let me first see that he is in visiting order."

Stepping before them, he looked into the room, and, motioning them to advance, closed the door when they had entered, and gently drew back the curtains of the bed. Upon it, in lieu of the dogged, black-visaged ruffian they had expected to behold, there lay a mere child, worn with pain and exhaustion and sunk into a deep sleep. His wounded arm, bound and splintered up, was crossed upon his breast; and his head reclined upon the other, which was half hidden by his long hair as it streamed over the pillow.

The honest gentleman held the curtain in his hand, and looked on for a minute or so, in silence. Whilst he was watching the patient thus, the younger lady glided softly past, and, seating herself in a chair by the bedside, gathered Oliver's hair

from his face. As she stooped over him, her tears fell upon his forehead.

The boy stirred and smiled in his sleep, as though these marks of pity and compassion had awakened some pleasant dream of a love and affection he had never known.

"What can this mean!" exclaimed the elder lady. "This poor child can never have been the pupil of robbers."

The surgeon shook his head in a manner which intimated that he feared it was very possible; and, observing that they might disturb the patient, led the way into an adjoining apartment.

"But even if he has been wicked," said Rose, "think how young he is; think that he may never have known a mother's love, or even the comfort of a home, and that ill-usage and blows, or the want of bread, may have driven him to herd with the men who have forced him to guilt. Aunt, dear aunt, for mercy's sake think of this before you let them drag this sick child to a prison which in any case must be the grave of all his chances of amendment. O, as you love me, and know that I have never felt the want of parents in your goodness and affection, but that I might have done so, and might have been equally helpless and unprotected with this poor child, have pity upon him before it is too late."

"My dear love!" said the elder lady, as she folded the weeping girl to her bosom; "do you think I would harm a hair of his head?"

"O no!" replied Rose, eagerly, "not you, aunt, not you!"

"No," said the old lady, with a trembling lip; "my days are drawing to their close, and may mercy be shown to me as I show it to others. What can I do to save him, sir?"

"Let me think, ma'am," said the doctor,—"let me think. I think if you give me a full and unlimited commission to bully Giles and that little boy Brittles, I can manage it. He is a faithful fellow and an old servant, I know; but you can make it up to him in a thousand ways, and reward him for being such a good shot besides."

It was evening before the kind-hearted doctor brought them the intelligence that Oliver was at length sufficiently restored to be spoken to. The boy was very ill, he said, and weak from the loss of blood; but his mind was so troubled with anxiety to disclose something, that he deemed it better to give him the opportunity than to insist upon his remaining quiet until next morning, which he should otherwise have done.

The conference was a long one. Oliver told them all his simple history, and was often compelled to stop by pain and want of strength. It was a

solemn thing to hear, in the darkened room, the feeble voice of the sick child recounting a weary catalogue of evils and calamities which hard men had brought upon him.

The momentous interview was no sooner concluded, and Oliver composed to rest again, than the doctor, after wiping his eyes and condemning them in the usual phrase for being weak all at once, betook himself down stairs to open upon Mr. Giles. And finding nobody about the parlors, it occurred to him that he could perhaps originate the proceedings with better effect in the kitchen; so into the kitchen he went.

"How is the patient to-night, sir?" asked Giles.

"So-so," returned the doctor. "I am afraid you have got yourself into a scrape there, Mr. Giles."

"I hope you don't mean to say, sir," said Mr. Giles, trembling, "that he's going to die. If I thought it, I should never be happy again. I would n't cut a boy off, no not even Brittles here, not for all the plate in the country, sir."

"That 's not the point," said the doctor, mysteriously. "Mr. Giles, are you a Protestant?"

"Yes, sir, I hope so," faltered Mr. Giles, who had turned very pale.

"And what are you, boy?" said the doctor, turning sharply upon Brittles.

"Lord bless me, sir," replied Brittles, starting violently; "I 'm the same as Mr. Giles, sir."

"Then tell me this," said the doctor, fiercely, "both of you, — both of you. Are you going to take upon yourselves to swear that that boy up stairs is the boy that was put through the little window last night? Out with it! Come! We are prepared for you."

The doctor, who was universally considered one of the best-tempered creatures on earth, made this demand in such a dreadful tone of anger, that Giles and Brittles, who were considerably muddled by ale and excitement, stared at each other in a state of stupefaction.

"Now, if you please, you can walk up stairs," said the doctor.

And closely following Mr. Losberne, the two police-officers ascended to Oliver's bedroom, Mr. Giles preceding the party with a lighted candle.

Oliver had been dozing, but looked worse, and was more feverish than he had appeared yet. Being assisted by the doctor, he managed to sit up in bed for a minute or so, and looked at the strangers without at all understanding what was going forward, and, in fact, without seeming to recollect where he was, or what had been passing.

"This," said Mr. Losberne, speaking softly, but with great vehemence notwithstanding,— "this is the

lad who, being accidentally wounded by a spring-gun in some boyish trespass on Mr. What-d'ye-call-him's grounds at the back here, is immediately laid hold of, and maltreated by that ingenious gentleman with the candle in his hand, who has placed his life in considerable danger, as I can professionally certify. You don't mean to deny that, I suppose?" said the doctor, laying Oliver gently down again.

"It was all done for the — for the best, sir," answered Giles. "I am sure I thought it was the boy, or I would n't have meddled with him. I am not of an inhuman disposition, sir."

"Thought it was what boy?" inquired the senior officer.

"The housebreaker's boy, sir!" replied Giles. "They — they certainly had a boy."

"Well, do you think so now?" inquired Blathers.

"Think what now?" replied Giles, looking vacantly at his questioner.

"Think it 's the same boy, stupid-head?" rejoined Mr. Blathers, impatiently.

"I don't know; I really don't know," said Giles, with a rueful countenance. "I could n't swear to him."

"What do you think?" asked Mr. Blathers.

"I don't know what to think," replied poor Giles. "I don't think it is the boy; indeed I 'm almost certain that it is n't. You know it can't be."

"Has this man been a drinking, sir?" inquired Blathers, turning to the doctor.

"What a precious muddle-headed chap you are!" said Duff, addressing Mr. Giles with supreme contempt.

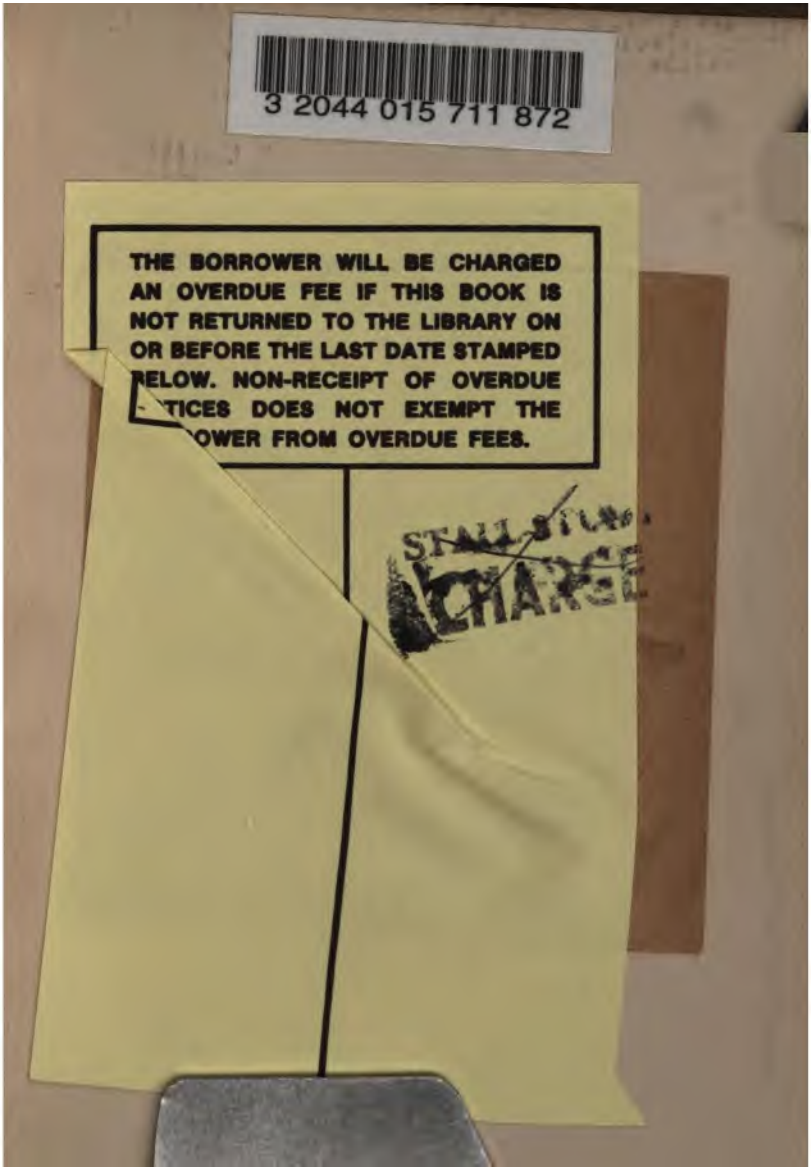
Among other ingenious surmises, the question was then raised whether Mr. Giles had really hit anybody, and upon examination of the fellow-pistol to that which he had fired, it turned out to have no more destructive loading than gunpowder and brown paper, — a discovery which made a considerable impression on everybody but the doctor, who had drawn the ball about ten minutes before. Upon no one, however, did it make a greater impression than on Mr. Giles himself, who, after laboring for some hours under the fear of having mortally wounded a fellow-creature, eagerly caught at this new idea, and favored it to the utmost. Finally, the officers, without troubling themselves very much about Oliver, left the house, promising to return next morning.

In short, after some more examination, and a great deal more conversation, a neighboring magistrate was readily induced to take the joint bail of Mrs. Maylie and Mr. Losberne for Oliver's appearance if he should ever be called upon; and Blathers and Duff, being rewarded with a couple of guineas, returned to town.

Meanwhile, Oliver gradually throve and prospered under the united care of Mrs. Maylie, Rose, and the kind-hearted Mr. Losberne. If fervent prayers gushing from hearts overcharged with gratitude be heard in heaven, — and if they be not, what prayers are? — the blessings which the orphan child called down upon them sunk into their souls, diffusing peace and happiness.

THE END.

Cambridge: Stereotyped and Printed by Welch, Bigelow, & Co.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